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THE MINISTRY

OF THE

MODERN CHURCH

LECTURES DELIVERED TO THE STUDENTS OF
REGENT'S PARK BAPTIST COLLEGE,

By

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PREFACE.

The Lectures in this volume were delivered to the students of Regent's Park College in the Spring of the present year. In giving them to a wider public I should like to express my personal obligation to Principal Gould, who allowed me to take my own line and to speak quite frankly to my audience about those radical changes in church method and organization which the best men and women among us have long seen to be inevitable. I could wish that it had been possible to include in this book some account of the informal conferences which followed certain of the lectures, at which questions were started and suggestions made that were, I think, fruitful to both lecturer and students. If it were possible to revive our church meetings so as to bring our people together to discuss not the theologies, about which we quarrel to little purpose, but the humanities for which society is waiting, the

themes presented here might be found of great practical value for such conferences. The one idea which every Free Church ought to be compelled to face and to grasp is its responsibility for the life of its district. It is in the hope that these lectures may thrust that conception of our duty upon the thoughts of Free Churchmen everywhere that I have willingly consented to their publication.

WHITEFIELDS, 1907.

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THE MINISTRY OF THE MODERN CHURCH.

I.

The Modern Problem.

I AM more conscious than I can possibly express in words, of the extraordinary generosity and confidence which have appointed me to the office that I must try to fill as best I can during the next few weeks. The difficulty of the position has grown upon me as I have had time to think about it. I am honestly alarmed at its responsibility and opportunity. I have had little or no academic experience to be my guide. My life has been a very busy and varied one ; much of my own work is frankly experimental ; and I do not know that the thick of the fight is the best place or time to write either a handbook on strategy or a defence of the "casus belli." What one soldier may tell out of his own observation

and experience to others who are training for the fight, I will do my best to tell you. I have determined to take as the subject of these lectures, the Ministry of the Modern Church, and to begin by asking your consideration of The Modern Problem. I throw myself upon your indulgence, and ask you to believe that if I speak occasionally in somewhat revolutionary terms of the necessity for reconstruction of organisation, or for the adoption of new lines of advance, it is in no censorious or superior spirit. None of my hearers can cherish towards the past exploits of our Nonconformist ancestors a more admiring and reverent spirit than I. To suggest that their lines of organisation and modes of service were wrong is no part of my business and is not in my mind. But all the same, what was right in them may be wrong in us. We are all evolutionists now. The scientists have dinned it into our ears that the organism is moulded, even though unconsciously, by the character of its environment. No thoughtful student of Nonconformist history can fail to remark that the narrow liberties within which our forefathers had to do their work did necessarily attenuate the activities of their Churches, and were

not without their influence on the very ideals which those Churches held of their own function and mission. If their opportunity had been larger their view of their privilege and duty would, I think, often have been braver. Too many of them accepted almost without protest and demur the notion which the State was good enough to form of their place in society—a licensed home for a select number of peculiar people, who might under suitable legal provisions be satisfactorily isolated from the body politic, and allowed to gratify their inexplicable religious tastes and prejudices without disturbance. The toleration extended with mingled condescension and contumely to the post-Restoration Dissenters was of this kind. In the eye of the State the licensed meeting house was the meanest possible provision for those whose opinions were so dangerous and undesirable that it would be the worst policy to popularise them by providing their propagandists with a grievance. There is ample evidence that the chill and patronising provisions of that Charter of Dissent—the Toleration Act—were the result of the opinion that it would be well for the peace and health of the State if certain poisonous

ideas could be drained off into a definite number of properly inspected and controlled cesspools. Moreover, the assumption was that when a minister of religion laid down his office as a State clergyman to become a Dissenting minister he thereby abdicated any pretensions he formerly had to be considered responsible for the beliefs and morals of the district where he laboured. He was now the shepherd of a small flock. Shepherd and sheep alike were, if I may put it that way, known to the police, under the vigilant eye of the authorities, and like, say, an anarchist club of to-day, suffered to exist on good behaviour. It is little use for us to-day to anathematise the state of things of a hundred and fifty years ago. There are quite enough survivals of this spirit in our own age to help us to realise how powerful and far-reaching it was and is. In some respects it has been the misfortune of English Nonconformity that it has had to do so much of its work in this atmosphere. It has been regarded as an insolent and unwarrantable invasion of a State monopoly. It has been painfully permitted to exist under what you might call the State regulation of heresy. The State has never welcomed it. It has done as

much against it as it dared, and as little in encouragement of it as it could. It has slowly and with infinite reluctance relaxed the public penalties against it. Every recognition of the right of a Dissenter to be regarded as a citizen, and to be admitted within the commonwealth on equal terms with his neighbours, has been wrenched from the State by the stern pressure of opinion in the growing power of Nonconformity. But I question whether even to-day, in vast districts of this country, the Nonconformist is regarded as a normal person. He is a theological crank, for whom special safety-valves have been permitted under a liberal constitution, and who must now be encouraged to confine himself and his activities to certain recognised spheres of work and worship, so that the neighbourhood at large may suffer as little deterioration as possible.

We should not greatly concern ourselves with these foolish ideas, which the State is slowly sloughing off, were it not that, as I say, this kind of social environment did undoubtedly have a narrowing and hardening effect upon the organism. Minister and people, having liberty to live unto themselves, did make this their life.

They planned their programmes with the knowledge that their liberties were of this meagre kind. Within the borders of their meeting-houses there was life of a very intense and often a very gracious type. They came very close to one another. Shut out of the world at large, their sense of brotherhood was very vivid. The relationship of the minister to his flock was at once paternal and magisterial. The meeting-house was the scene of memorable and authentic victories of the Spirit. It became a spiritual home; a home the discipline of which was often rather severe than genial. All the circumstances tended to accentuate the Calvinistic presentment of the doctrine of the elect. The message preached was sharp and hard in its emphasis of election and reprobation; and the supercilious antagonism of the official world to the Dissenting Churches provoked from the latter an equally vehement attitude of antagonism, as of the Church to the world. The words, "Come ye apart, be ye separate," were not merely held to justify the general action of the separatist, but a position of complete detachment from worldly affairs, amusements, and occupations. In these ways and others that I might mention, we

see the effect of the environment on the organism. Our Churches were driven to adopt a mental and social attitude which, if not false, was, to borrow the Archbishop of Canterbury's distinction, incomplete. It may have been inevitable, if we can find any comfort in that watchword of fatalism. It was very far indeed from being the last word in regard to the Christian relations of Church and State.

I ask you to agree with me that the whole mischief of the situation lay in the idea of isolation. The policy of the State for Nonconformity was a policy of isolation. The policy Nonconformity accepted, if it did not prefer, was a policy of isolation. It seemed—I will never admit that it was—more concerned to provide a lifeboat to take off an elect few from a distressed vessel in a time of storm, than to save the vessel with all hands. We must be quite just, and we must admit that if Nonconformity was partly driven to this position of isolation by an unfriendly State, it was also partly drawn by its interpretation of its own principles. It suffered from the persecution of parliaments: from dogmas, now rapidly crumbling, of the divine rights of Church-

establishments. But it suffered also from the coercion of a harsh and rigid interpretation of its own faith. The kingdom of heaven could be realised and organised outside the normal social order at a given number of centres where a few earnest men and women would separate themselves from the world for this one purpose. Words that are very precious to us—the independence of the Church—did come to wear in their vocabulary the strict and severe isolation of each independent society. The members might be few and poor. The independence they believed in might demand an heroic sacrifice; but then they were as Lazarus in the bosom of God, and between them and the under-world of Dives there was an impassable gulf fixed. The illustration is not exact, for Dives might certainly come to them, although they can hardly be said to have contemplated the possibility of going to him.

If anyone had said that Nonconformist Churches were a new incarnation of the monastic ideal he would have been laughed to scorn. Nonconformity has always felt itself to be the legitimate heir of Protestant Christendom. For the monastery and

for the idea it represented, Nonconformity has had no mercy. Our fathers were not outwardly and formally committed to the ascetic life. True, they were not averse to "fasts," and from time to time proclaimed and observed them ; but they were always wisely opposed to the bondage of formal rubrics in this respect. And yet we cannot, I think, deny that they were, in the main, ascetic in spirit. They fasted from many pleasures, crucified many affections, and took inward vows of abstinence from many pursuits and occupations which we to-day regard as not only legitimate but wholesome. They had their *index expurgatorius* on which I suppose I might say all novels were placed, and probably all dramatic literature and the great body of poetry. At one time they were commonly known as the men of one book, and their magnificent Biblical scholarship, even if quite uncritical, made them mentally as well as spiritually robust and formidable. There is very little evidence in all the sermons which I have ever come across illustrative of the thinking and preaching that prevailed among them, of any special sense of the value or beauty of nature. As for science, it can hardly have been said to exist,

and in so far as it did exist it was suspect. Nor is that to be wondered at, for the name Science, so honoured in our day, stood for all kinds of astrologies and quackeries, to say nothing of the dark mysteries of the so-called art of the leech, with his potions and his blood-letting, and the crudities of his surgical operations. Science, in short, had a bad name. It was even more rigid and unenlightened and conservative than the darkest and grimmest of theologies. One has only to remind oneself of these things to see how contracted, if concentrated, were the interests of the old Nonconformist Churches, their ministers, and their members. Their horizon was not a wide one. On the other hand, we may compare their estate with the garden of the old professor of whom you have heard, who was always talking to his students about his garden, and drawing wonderful illustrations from it. One day two of the students found their way to his house, only to discover to their amazement that the garden was a very narrow and insignificant affair. "But, professor," said one of them in referring to the fact, "how small it is!" "Yes," replied the sage, with a significant upward gesture, "but then

how high it is!" And we must never allow ourselves to forget that if the walls around these little gardens were lofty, and the breadth of outlook not conspicuous, the way of heaven was, as St. Cuthbert said, always open. They were like Victor Hugo's hero, who had but a short garden to walk in, but had, as he said, "immensity to dream in; on the earth a few flowers, but all the stars in heaven!"

There is beauty here and power, but when all is said, the attitude is monastic. It belongs to the type of piety which in Dr. Hatch's words, "followed John the Baptist into the wilderness rather than Christ into the world." It is built on the assumption that the world is a wicked place and we are better out of it. The doctrine at the root of it would seem to be that the ignominious issue of the Christian Redemption is in the salvage of a handful of rescued souls from the wreckage of humanity. It was not intended that Nonconformist Churches, on the backwaters of life's mighty and majestic river, should stand as so many coward's castles; but it was inevitable that they should come to wear that aspect. The very ideal speaks of despair. It gives the world up; it gives

society up. It concedes the devil's claim, and makes him a present of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and makes no effort to contest his practical supremacy. The Christian creeps away into some secluded haven of refuge and leaves humanity to its doom. He solaces his own soul with psalm and prayer ; and is almost like the righteous in Baxter's awful chapter, whose beatitude is increased by the sound of the torments of the damned.

I think it is impossible for us to exaggerate the evil effect which this attitude, and its alleged Pharisaism and alienation from humanity, has wrought. It has left us a tradition of the ministry and the Church, from which we are only to-day liberating ourselves. What a legacy of misrepresentation we have inherited ! and how difficult it is to disabuse the popular mind of the notion that our business is still to collect a number of saved people out of a world that is doomed to perdition. Yet, gentlemen, we are bound to change all that, and substitute the conviction that we are here to save the world. It has not only been in England but on the Continent that these counsels of despair have often become the sour dregs of a Calvinistic

Protestant creed. Nobody alive has a keener sense than I of the appalling errors and iniquities of the Roman Church. But amid all its rank corruption and vaulting ambition, it had one great note—the note of comprehensiveness, catholicity, and universality. It never faltered in the belief that all life was the province of the Church. It never lowered the proud claims of Christ to rule the world. In its efforts to assert those claims it laid its hands on every weapon that Christ Himself disallowed. It made every mistake; it was guilty of every offence. It was meddling, intrusive, impertinent, pretentious. It was officious where it should have been modest; and cruel where it should have been merciful. It believed, against its Master, in the efficacy of force and even of fraud to accomplish righteous and spiritual results. It mistook not so much ends as means. Its ambitions were curiously mingled of high and low. They were high, for they were nothing less than a subject humanity; they were low, for they were satisfied with the outward form rather than the inward faith. The confessional was the witness to the daring resolution to rule even the last secret of the private life, and to explore the

dimmest and darkest recesses of conscience and conduct. It was this tremendous imperial claim that captured the imagination of the West, and held it spellbound for centuries. Its prelates might have been, and often were, proud and contemptuous, but at least the best and bravest of them rebuked kings and grasping barons in the name of religion, while its real saints, for whom wealth and honours had no charm, feared not the face of man, and made themselves the mouthpiece of the poor and the oppressed. Contrast that spirit with the far too negative and contracted spirit of continental Nonconformity, which might have shown to Rome the purer and better way. Remember the just criticisms of Mazzini, who, leaving the old antiquated and water-logged ark of Rome, could yet find no alternative vessel large and noble enough to make the genuine Christian adventure. No Protestant cause in Italy seemed to have the vision of Empire, and a world-wide victorious mission establishing the pure sway of Christ over all consciences and habits of life. "There is no religion," he cries to the Italian Protestants, "without faith in the solidarity of the human race! Your contracted

inspiration no longer fecundates the souls of men." "Faith begets faith," he says again, "you cannot expect that men should believe in yours when they see that it does not furnish you with the consciousness of a right or the feeling of a duty to fulfil!" And again he delivers his soul in this fashion: "'We have nothing to do,' say the Protestants of Italy, 'with political questions.' Is it, then, by leaving man in the hands of his oppressors that you would elevate and emancipate his soul? Is it by leaving the idol of blind force in the service of imposture that you think to raise in the human soul an altar to the God of a free conscience? Moses broke the idols in pieces; he knew well that so long as the idols existed there would always be idolaters." It was a deserved rebuke, even if Mazzini had not enquired very deeply how far a repressive environment had been responsible for this stunted, emaciated organism.

Such considerations as these are necessary if we are to equip our Churches and our ministry for the new opportunity that has come to us with the twentieth century. They remind us of a spirit we are outgrowing—have, I am persuaded, for the

most part outgrown. The official attitude of the State to English Nonconformity, while theoretically much the same, is practically very different. Still officially, and in the eye of the law, we are not the correct thing, we do not belong to the regulars. We are outsiders. The State still bestows its favour and patronage on an episcopal Church, conferring upon its ministry an official status, and establishing and endowing truth as expressed in thirty-nine articles of religion which "ought thoroughly to be accepted and believed," but which at the same time, it is generally agreed, are a strain upon the conscience and an offence to the reason. The State, however, if it makes the Anglican priest its petted favourite, no longer denies to us the elementary rights of citizenship, but authorises us actually to marry in our own places of worship, and even to bury our dead in parish churchyards. Lest we should be unduly elated by these privileges we are gently reminded of our inferiority, inasmuch as our children are not eligible for head-teacherships in the majority of the ratepayers' schools; but we are hopeful that even this slur upon our character will be removed in time. Let us realise, I beseech you,

that we are passing out of the cold throes of disability and persecution into the light of just and equitable treatment. We do not envy our brethren in the Establishment their golden chains. We have no thought but of satisfaction that we are spared the irritation and disability of that rigid framework of creed and rubric in which the soul of the episcopal Church is at this moment incarcerated. Nothing in my judgment can arrest the manifest decline and fall of the sacerdotal communions. The reign of Christianity is still a magnificent possibility; but clerical and sacerdotal rule in an age of democracy is the foolishest and vainest of dreams. The rise of the people to power spells the exit of the pale priest from his intrusive and disastrous authority over human affairs. Democracy and Hierarchy are irreconcilables. Every gain of the one is the loss of the other. The question, to my mind, is whether the reign of Christianity can be established and maintained through the instrumentality of those who disclaim all priestly pretensions, who return to the primitive spirit of our faith and order, but also are as loyal as any Catholic that ever lived to the elder ideal of a State moulded and governed in obedience

to the will of Christ, and a social, industrial, and domestic life, shaped by Christian forces and ennobled by Christian discipline.

At the risk of appearing polemical and depreciatory, I am bound to express my belief that the very success of the priestly movement in Anglicanism has destroyed the opportunity that great Church undoubtedly once had, to be the spiritual mistress of this kingdom, and to preside over the destinies of this great and free democracy. The parochial idea was once a possible and a worthy one. But if it is to survive it will be a parish-minister, not a parish-priest, who will make it acceptable and successful. The Anglican clergy have fallen victims to a mediæval ideal, and have imported it into these modern times, where it still struts and limps about; but no artificial pomp, and no support of State sanction, can disguise the superstition in it. Nothing can save the sacramental and sacerdotal theories and practices from appearing either childish or contemptible in an intellectual and rational age. They are the creeds of dying nations, they are the grave-clothes of a moribund and decadent faith, but with every resurrection of intellectual manhood or democratic

ideals they are like the withes on the arms of Samson, as tow when it touches the fire. Anglicanism is still hankering after the notion that the England of the twentieth century can be clerically managed and governed. Many of her best and wisest sons and daughters, however, foresee the end. The political and spiritual despotism of the priest is doomed, even though for a moment the prelates be triumphant in the House of Lords. The priest is less detestable to-day than at the full height of his authority; but his position is even more pitiable. If we no longer fear him it is because he is discredited as a childish figure. He is dissociated in the popular imagination from every masculine and rational quality. He is largely a creature of routine, with an aspect of injured dignity, resting his claims upon an exploded authority, and astonished that the busy, free, progressive generations have so little use for him. Here and there a man of exceptional ability or enthusiasm or commonsense may cleverly disguise the rents in his garments or the breaches in his armour. But despite all loud and boastful words—the vain and vague echoes of once great and dreaded claims—the day of the priest in life

and politics, throughout Western Christendom, is at the eleventh hour.

If that is so, it must be clear that the situation can only be saved, and the reign of Christianity established by a new order of ministry, by men of new ideals of life and service—ideals which create no antagonism between them and the age which they are to serve and whose higher necessities they are to meet. And I am aware that at this point it is customary in Free Church apologetics to exalt the ideal of the prophet, the inspired preacher, with a free soul and a divine Gospel, at whose feet a nation, or a city, or a village, will sit, and elect him spontaneously the guide and preceptor of their faith and morals. Neither is it easy to say too much in praise of the prophetic strain in the ministry. It is always welcome wherever it appears; or should be. It is as a scourge to fashionable follies and popular sins; but if it does not command affection it inspires reverence. The authentic prophet has to-day, as ever, the power to humiliate men's souls, and clothe their consciences in sackcloth. Wherever and whenever he may appear he will exert instantaneous moral authority over the

people, and miracles of transfiguration will be wrought upon character and conduct. But I am sure I shall not be accused of any lack of sympathy with the prophetic ideal if I throw out one or two criticisms. There is a reason why he should not figure very largely in these lectures. I observe that in the oldest days he was not usually found in the schools of the prophets. He was, I suppose, impatient of training and discipline. And I rather suspect that when he comes to us in our own age he may come through irregular channels, and owe little to our systems of culture and education. Again, the supply of prophets has never been equal to the demand. It would turn the hair of every college professor white with worry if he had to provide a prophet for every city, town, and village in this country, and every station on the mission field. I have often found myself wondering why prophets are so rare and wishing it were not so. Even when they do come among us, they by no means always choose the ministry as their vocation. They go into politics as a Bright or a Gladstone; or into science as a Faraday or an Oliver Lodge; or into literature as a Carlyle or a Ruskin. A still more serious defect,

so far as our modern views are concerned, is that the prophet is almost always a profound individualist. You cannot include him in any social system. He is intense often to the point of intolerance. He is an enthusiast to the verge of the eccentric and the fanatical. He is frequently a man of one idea. He lives remote from the life of the people; and preaches at them rather than talks to them. He is an object of great reverence, but by no means always of equal affection. I have often felt that there is the material for many sermons in the contrast presented to us in the Old Testament between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Elijah was the absolute type of the Hebrew prophet. He lived in solitude, but made rare and startling appearances, usually to denounce doom upon guilty king, apostate priest, or faithless people. He was stern, rugged, awful, unbending, and uncompromising. In spirit he was an anchorite, separate from the life of humanity, and oblivious of its simple, prosaic, human interests. But with his departure there comes a complete change in the order of ministry. Elisha is his successor, his chosen disciple, his man. He wears his mantle, he aspires to a double portion of his

spirit. Yet the sacred books reveal to us Elisha as a homely, friendly person, with little or no rugged authority, living among the people, and sharing all their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. The simple explanation would seem to be that the times had changed. "New occasions teach new duties, Time makes ancient good uncouth." The age was different, and the man for the age must be different too. Elijah was a great individualist; and Elisha—if we may use the word in its true sense and not as a party shibboleth—a socialist, concerned to build up gently and quietly a pure and devout and righteous social life in the community. He deals less in thunder and lightning, but more in rain and sunshine and dew. Perhaps we should prefer to speak of the prophet Elijah and the pastor Elisha; and I am not at all sure that the pastoral influence in the land was not more lasting than the prophetic.

And now I propose to ask whether, in the light of what I have been trying to say, it is possible to indicate some characteristics of the modern ministry that we must look for and find in the men of to-day if we are to realise our opportunity; quali-

ties that are not for the elect few, but qualities to which all may aspire. There is such a quality as spiritual genius, a treasure rich and rare ; but not to many among us is granted the endowment of the soul of the mystic or the tongue of angels. I am in search of the attainable and I naturally indicate first the possession of *the modern mind* ; but that introduces us to too large a discussion to be dealt with in this preliminary fashion ; and on that vital subject I shall ask you to allow me to speak with some detail at another time. It is sufficient to say now that we must belong to our century ; that we must live in it and not in mediæval times, nor even in the ever-fascinating 17th century. We must be men of the Puritan type rather than the Puritan times. We cannot carry a 17th century intellect to any successful solution of a 20th century problem. Nothing is easier, and in a sense nothing is less likely to cause friction and disturbance in one's ministry, than to confine one's dogmatic opinions on theology and politics to the byegone centuries. It is always more easy to be just to a man when he is dead and buried. Then is the time for generous tributes and magnanimous epitaphs. But when he is here

among us as an animated fact, challenging our theories, and perhaps troubling our consciences, it may be ascribed to the grace of God if we can talk about him with a fairly civil tongue. Contemporaneous problems and personalities are always either highly contentious subjects, or else so dull that nobody would be tempted to make a sermon out of them. Every topic that is worth discussing probably affects adversely some person who has cushions to remove and pew-rents to transfer to the Church opposite. Discretion therefore dictates that no subject of human interest should be admitted to the pulpit until at least two generations have lapsed since it was a living theme. The abolition of slavery in America is now a perfectly safe illustration to use; because the evil ways of deceased slave-holders do not provoke any violent modern sympathies; but you must be prepared for trouble if a relentless logic leads you on to comment on the Congo or the Transvaal. Experience assures me that it is quite safe and proper for the preacher to reform the Roman Empire. In doing that he is in no danger from anyone unless it be some historical theorist with a maggot in his brain. Reforms in the British

Empire are esteemed less suitable for advocacy from a British pulpit. It is permissible to attack the sins against conscience and freedom in other lands. Russia is very useful just now ; and of the spirit of greed and avarice and corruption, America always comes in handily by way of illustration. After all, your sermons are not likely to be delivered in these lands, and there are ten chances to one that no Russian or American will be there to hear ; so you may fire away. But I am bound in all seriousness to warn you that the prevalent belief in the impracticability and remoteness of modern preaching derives a good deal of support from these causes. It is good-bye to a preacher's usefulness if it comes to be suspected or felt that he never comes near to the sins of his own generation, and the follies of his own age, and the vices of his own country. You must not complain if, when you have elected to preach to the man in the steeple hat, you do not hit the man in the modern bowler. If you address yourself to the ancestors of those who are listening to you, you may of course, by good luck, smite some hereditary quality in their descendants, and so get your arrow home on the white. But it's a

sort of gamble ; and I have come to the conclusion that it is better to run all risks and be frank and fearless about modern tendencies of error and evil in the very audiences we address. We are much more likely to do something ; and we shall never create the dismal impression that we are poor, hapless anachronisms—survivals of past centuries who have no message for our own.

But having said thus briefly something on which I hope to expatiate later, I have no manner of doubt as to the quality to be emphasised next. It is what I would call *a touch of the heroic*—a divine ambitiousness—an exultant sense of opportunity and mission. What I have said of the paralysis that crept over Nonconformity in the days of its isolation, beneath the ban of the State, will enforce the moral I am concerned with now. If I am right in my analysis of the present ecclesiastical situation in this country, an old position of spiritual influence is vacant, or in the way of becoming vacant. The official parish minister has elected to be a priest, and, as such, may be taken to have signed his deed of abdication. There is no possible exponent of the religious instincts and convictions of the age, and no possible influence

in the commonwealth to give a religious direction to social, industrial, and political movements but the Free Church minister. The present opportunity is his. It is this thought that will have to possess our ministry in the future. We have got to produce men who, humbly but fearlessly, without bravado but without timidity, will from the outset assume duties and responsibilities towards the whole manifold life of the district where their lot is cast. They will not and they must not be content simply to be the ministers of the select number of worshippers who are drawn to a given centre on Sunday by reason of denominational sympathies, or doctrinal affinities, or what not. They are elect to the high office of the Christian ministry to serve Christ and the people. As our broadening civic liberties have drawn us within the constitution, and made us heirs of all the interests and burdens of this nation, so Nonconformity must now quarter itself frankly, fully, and avowedly within the local life of the city, or countryside everywhere, and address itself with a new consciousness of a catholic mission to the citizenship as a whole.

Forgive me if I seem to see in the braver

national crusade to which we are committed in this age a new enactment of that famous scene which Tennyson has described for us in the Idylls of the King, when Arthur and his new order of knights bound themselves by the sacred vow to create a new commonwealth—a Christian nation.

> Then at the banquet, those great lords of Rome,
> The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
> Strode in and claimed their tribute as of yore.
> But Arthur spake: Behold, for these have sworn
> To wage my wars and follow me the king.
> The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
> And we that fight for our fair Father Christ,
> Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
> To drive the heathen from our Roman wall,
> No tribute will we pay.

Believe me, the old order is changing again. Rome, in our day, stands for a sacerdotal and sacramentarian type of Christianity, utterly alien to the genius of a democratic age; and such a faith is losing its grip every day of the free souls of a progressive people. Yet must we have spiritual forces that will fight the good fight for "our fair Father Christ," now that the elder army organization is enfeebled and demoralized so that it is "grown too weak and old to drive the heathen" out of modern society life. We must

organize a new model army, composed, as Cromwell said, of "men of a spirit," officered and led by those who know quite well the arduous and exacting nature of the campaign, but who will fail neither in insight nor enthusiasm. You remember how Tennyson sketched the problem that confronted the Christian knighthood, which was, after all, the Church militant, of Arthur's day.

> And so there grew great tracts of wilderness
> Wherein the beast was ever more and more
> And man was less and less.

The mission of Arthur and his men was to make that wilderness blossom as the rose, to save manhood, and destroy what the Revelation calls "the power and authority of the beast."

> For thus the land of Camelot was waste,
> Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,
> And none or few to scare or chase the beast,
> So that wild dog, and wolf, and boar and bear
> Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
> And wallowed *in the gardens of the king.*
> And ever and anon the wolf would steal
> The children and devour; but now and then—
> Her own brood lost or dead—lent her fierce teat
> To human sucklings, and the children housed
> In her foul den, then at their meat would growl
> And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
> Till, straightened they grew up to wolf-like men
> Worse than the wolves.

I have no doubt your ministry must include the quiet pasturing of the sheep; but I am certain it must also include this grim battle with wolf and boar and bear. In Milton's time it took on another aspect :—

> Help us to save free Gospel from the maw
> Of hireling wolves.

But there is more at stake even than free Gospel. There are cities and country-sides in peril. There are "wolf-like men," the developed hooligans, who were once the children housed in the foul dens and nourished on brutality and beastliness as on their mother's milk. It is useless to plan a ministry for the redemption of England in which this problem has no place. If there should be in our ministry any monastic strain, any tendency to get away from the centre of things and inhabit some Nonconformist lodge in a vast wilderness, any touch of effeminacy, we are disqualified for our modern mission, and the sooner we confess that it is beyond our strength the better. If we have chosen as our sphere of activity the academic, the philosophic, and even the theological, we can, I have no doubt, do valuable service. But ordinary hu-

manity, with its appalling social and moral needs, will turn for hope and deliverance elsewhere. Do not be surprised that I should plead for a touch of the heroic in your ambition and in your plans. The age of chivalry must return, not to fill our heads with romantic nonsense and feed our indignation on imaginary affronts and fancied grievances, but to re-create among us knightly courage and chivalry, indifference to personal sacrifice if the oppressed may be delivered, and, above all, childhood and womanhood be honoured and saved.

There are not a few who say sorrowfully—

> The true old times are dead
> When every morning brought a noble chance,
> And every chance brought out a noble knight.

They are not dead, or they live again in the true new times. We of the Nonconformist ministry can never forget that the cause we represent has had its own age of chivalry; the record whereof is written in letters of gold in the book of the chronicles of the people of England. We are of the breed of those who humbled crowns and mitres, who proved to all mankind that righteousness does exalt nations; who for freedom's sake,

truth's sake, went forth not knowing whither, and sowed the world with free commonwealths. Freedom is our native air. Where democracy is the law of the State we are most at home. Its principles and ideals are congenial to us. The swing of the pendulum has brought our opportunity back again. To realize it we need the brave, heroic, Cromwellian spirit, and the ideal of a Christian commonwealth, of whose members we are, under God, the servants and the comrades.

II.

"BY WHAT AUTHORITY?"

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"By What Authority?"

THE changes that the last century has witnessed have affected every calling in life more or less, and have certainly not been without their influence upon the Christian ministry. I often wonder whether we realize how profound and far-reaching these changes have been. Even such time-honoured and venerable institutions as the House of Commons have been entirely re-fashioned, not only in regard to the constituency to which it is responsible, but in regard to the methods of its work; and the process of evolution is still far from complete. The British Universities, too, the appropriate home of "the last enchantments of the Middle Age," have not been exempt from the action of the reform spirit. There is less and less tolerance in the modern world for institutions that cannot be justified by a utilitarian test. This tendency has its perils, which we can all

indicate ; but, on the whole, it is sound. We are all of us in process of being fashioned and adapted to a certain work, a form of service ; and it does not stand to common-sense that when the nature of the work changes the workman can remain altogether unaffected. Mr. Lowell once complained that the leading question of to-day is, "What is it good for?" "a question," he added, "that would abolish the rose, and be answered triumphantly by the cabbage." That is, perhaps, rather a crude way of putting it. I do not think the modern utilitarian desires to abolish the rose. He does not quarrel with the higher utilities. To be beautiful is to subserve certain sensuous ends ; to be fragrant is to disseminate sweetness and justify existence. I am very far from disputing the fact that simply to be a saint is to fulfil a mission to the higher life of humanity ; and I do not believe that even the austere spirit of modern utilitarianism would willingly abolish the saint any more than it would abolish the rose. In some respects it is curiously sensitive to genuine spiritual impressions, and reverent of any authentic strains of the music of the spheres that utter themselves above its busy and fevered life. The man

that does things, is not so supercilious of the man who dreams things, as we are apt to imply. Look at the eagerness of some self-made millionaire to endow colleges and universities, and thus offer his tribute to the scholar and the thinker. The fact of the matter is that the man of the world has a sneaking admiration and veneration for all those who do not bow the knee to his own idolatries, and refuse to be bound to his chariot-wheels. He may think them impossible from any business point of view, visionary, and impracticable; but he has a very real sense that the world would be poorer if there were no room in it for those who minister to its higher life. At the same time, it is as well to remember that, if the modern man is not unappreciative of the rose, the cabbage does, as Lowell said, triumphantly answer his question— which is no more than to say that ours is an age in which humble and unpretentious but serviceable qualities are not to be despised. There is nothing romantic about the cabbage, I admit. There is, I suppose, no modern minister who would not resent a comparison with that necessary and nutritious vegetable. I cannot make it picturesque.

I can only say that it is substantial, satisfying, and reasonably palatable; and that its merits, if not of a poetical order, are at least universally recognized.

If I had time, I should not hesitate to put in a bold plea for the "cabbage," a serious plea for the cultivation of some very prosaic and commonplace qualities which certainly will not prejudice your claim to a place in our modern economy. You are, of course, not unaware that that claim is being challenged vigorously and persistently. Mr. Lowell's question, "What is it good for?" is being asked concerning our ministry. I want to know what answer you think we ought to make; what answer you feel able conscientiously to make. Will you say our function is decorative, like the rose? Do you take a humble or exalted view of your place in modern society? It is a somewhat alarming possibility that that society may decide that we have made out no case and it has no use for us.

I want to put the position to you very plainly. You are going out into the Nonconformist ministry to make a claim, a very daring claim. You are going to brush aside a certain official State theory

which has hitherto refused you your diploma as a competent spiritual physician, and has insisted that your prescriptions have no virtue—nay, has regarded you in the light of a quack. The State has felt it to be well to prescribe the thirty-nine Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer, for the spiritual perplexities and ailments of the English people, and it looks upon you with suspicion if you either add to or subtract from that ancient prescription. Yet, somehow or other, you must contrive to get yourselves accepted as authorized persons under such conditions as these. For it is useless for you to go out and face the world at all if you have the shadow of a doubt about your authority, or the efficacy of the prescription and treatment you are to recommend. The very first question that concerns the Free Church minister of to-day is this vital question of authority, the legitimacy of his orders, and the right, of which he is conscious, to be the mouthpiece of God to his generation.

I should like my first main point to be an old-fashioned and a personal one. We do not differentiate the ministry into a caste or an order when we maintain that there is one sign of our

calling which ought to be outward and visible, and without which it is certain that no man's orders are holy. It is not easy to talk about it, lest in handling sacred things we should injure their bloom. But I have already said to you that the world does bow in spirit before the personal authority of the true saint. The word, as you know, has been greatly abused. It has been confounded with the ascetic, the anchorite, the idle dreamer and mystic, the intolerant prophet, and so forth. It has again and again been denied where it most properly belongs, to the valiant man of affairs whose activities are guided by his ideal. I never can understand why so many of the Christian saints are so anæmic. Their faces have no character in them. They are painfully alike, and give you the impression that religion is a very stilted and artificial affair, with a melancholy tinge. Devotional females, who faded away in convents when they might have been much more sensibly employed in normal homes, have been canonised again and again by an authoritative Church interested in setting up a false and unworthy standard of saintliness. As for the men, the contracted life, the ascetic diet, the frock

and cowl of the monk, have been almost necessary passports to a saintly reputation. You and I are very sure that this is wholly mischievous, and that the effect on the world at large of this artificial standard of saintliness has been disastrous. Our saints have been great souls, who not only preached the gospel, but governed states, moulded literature, suffered for political liberties, endured toilsome hours on parish councils, or sought to humanise the poor-law system. It is much easier to cultivate a devotional life apart from the world than to carry the reverent Christian spirit to all the drudgery and detail of business and public life; and the latter is consequently by far the rarer and the nobler victory. Do not let it be supposed, therefore, that we, of all people, can afford to let the ideal of the saint drop into the background. So far I can speak freely. The danger of the ministry is professionalism. You and I become too familiar with the mere mechanics of the pulpit and the routine of church life. It means a constant fight with self to conquer every tendency to allow prayer to become a matter of form, and preaching perfunctory, and to retain undiminished and undimmed the sense

of the wonder and glory of our avocation. And the one thing that is fatal to the realization of the saintly life is the intrusion of the professional spirit. Against that I would fain set you on your guard. You must not imagine that the sacredness of your office, and the fulfilment of high and holy duties, will in themselves keep your spirit sensitive to the divine presence and power. What custom can do to stale your work and deaden your spiritual interest almost passes belief. Moreover, we live under conditions which make it very easy for us to accept the estimate held of us by the public; and the public is apt to think and to say that, after all, we are paid to hold and disseminate certain views and organize certain services. Their notion is the low, secular notion, that we are employed by a society as a species of paid official to perform definite duties, which include the expounding of the principles of the society and the building up of its membership. They estimate success by dollars; and, alas that we should have to admit it! their standard is too often adopted even by the better-instructed people among whom we work and to whom we are directly responsible. I repeat, it is so easy to let

your mission down, to begin to regard yourself in this professional light, and to accept tacitly the standard of success which the world holds. But if you do you must immediately sacrifice any hope of exerting that unique moral authority which belongs to the true saintly life. I am anxious to impress upon you that no changes in the methods of work or of preaching can affect the importance that attaches to the personal character of the minister. No new and popular schemes and enterprises can relieve the modern minister of the necessity of being a good and devout Christian man. If he is not that, no up-to-date organization can make his ministry a success. If he does not know the reality of answers to prayer, if he has no hours of personal penitence, no sincere tears for his own failures and shortcomings, no times when God and his own soul are the two realities in the universe, if he has no secret of God hid in his heart which, as Mr. A. C. Benson says, "makes him smile when he is alone," he may be a useful organizer, a diligent visitor, a sociable, charitable, excellent fellow, for whom society will have a good word, but he will never be a good minister of Jesus

Christ. He is an hireling, but no shepherd. He is the victim of the tendency to professionalism ; and he has either lost, or never found, the secret of that authority which will under no circumstances attach to anyone to whom it is possible for the world to attribute mercenary motives. We may explain it how we will, but there is something in the saintly character that delivers the true minister from such accusations. He is not other-worldly, but he is un-worldly ; and the multitude is swift to recognize instinctively where a life of devotion and piety is inspired by the highest motives.

Before I leave this part of my subject I should like to make an appeal to you. I believe this is the part of our duty as ministers which it is easiest to slur over and neglect. Other duties belong to our more public life, and have to be done. If you do not prepare your sermons, if you do not attend certain prescribed meetings, if you do not visit the sick, you will most probably be called to account—as you ought to be—by someone. These are your duties to others. But what I am pleading for is your duty to yourself. The very literature you read

is apt to be chosen with a view to the pulpit; that is to say, with a distinctly utilitarian end. The Bible itself becomes a collection of possible texts which, like Gaul, can be divided into three parts. Nothing exactly speaks to you, pierces your conscience, strengthens your faith, sanctifies your imagination. Now it is the simplest and most solemn truth that we cannot feed others ourselves unfed, nor draw our congregations upward unless we lead the way. No real preaching is speculative; all is experimental, as I shall often have occasion to insist. We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. We may of course preach the things we do not know, and seek to recommend physic we have not tried, and of the virtue of which we have no personal experience; but, if so, it is but a sorry outlook. To talk about the blessedness of communion with God if we have never ourselves knelt within the holy of holies, is to come perilously near the cant from which we all pray to be delivered. Neither must our experiences of God and His Gospel belong to the past. Such influences are like manna which cannot be kept. They must be new every morning, and repeated every

evening. Your congregation will soon discover if you have nothing new to tell them out of your own experience. If we have been everywhere except into the "inner chamber," have read everything except the scriptures of the soul, have mingled in all life except

> The great society
> Of nature, angels, and of God;

if we have been conversed with by men and newspapers and books, but not by the Spirit that searcheth the understanding and trieth the heart, it will be known. The marks of the Lord Jesus will not be upon our spirits. We shall not convince our fellows that we know whom we have believed, and our public ministry will be as a tree, to all outward seeming vigorous and successful, but which bears no fruit.

So far all is plain: no changes of to-day or to-morrow can diminish the responsibility resting upon us to seek to be holy as He is holy. But now you will be ready to remind me that this does not carry us very far towards vindicating the authority of our special calling, for what we are demanding of ourselves is something we must demand of all Christians, whatever their standing

and office in the Church of Christ. It will be well to be very honest about this matter of the authority of the ministry. I am somewhat afraid that even the attitude of our Churches towards the ministry has undergone or is undergoing an unfavourable change. People are very fond of telling us that the reverence for the minister is not what it used to be. I do not say he is not still in many homes accorded a precedence which is not always good for him. I do not say he is kept out of the best arm chair, or basely deprived of the wing of the chicken. I do not say that here and there it may not still be his unhappy fate to be the idol of the foolish virgins, whose lamps have gone out while they have worked slippers for him. But it is the higher and deeper reverence I am thinking of. The Ministry! Think. It is a subject that at first sight has no more than a very limited interest. It is a work to which a few hundred young men give themselves year by year, a considerable minority of whom live to regret the mistake they made, or if they do not their congregations do. What we call the Christian ministry is, I suppose, humanly speaking, the least of all callings. As a rule, well-to-do parents do not keep this as even a possible

career before the minds of their sons. They think, not cynically, but very definitely, that they can do better than that. All of which makes it the more necessary to speak some frank truths on the subject. Nothing is more certain than that our ministers come to be as our congregations think of them. If the people among whom we are brought up ignore the claims of the ministry and speak lightly, because they think lightly, of its duties, and obligations, and possibilities, it will come to deserve their low opinion. On the other hand, if they indulge in the inflated and exaggerated language in which the ministry is sometimes referred to, they will be responsible for encouraging those foolish, artificial and hollow notions of it which have caused it to be secretly if not openly suspected and despised by ordinary men and women of the world. It is high time that some efforts should be made to set the work of the ministry in its true light: to save it from the detractions of its enemies and the adulation of its friends. There is nothing which more needs the day-light of Christian common sense than the work of the ministry. So much of the prestige and ascendancy of the ministry in the Church has been derived from its supposed power

of working miracles that it is imagined that they who altogether deny any such power fail duly to magnify their office. Nothing could be further from the truth. To relieve the office of the Christian minister from any imputation of magical power, to rescue it from the too-current superstition that it implies some dealing in the occult, and to establish it firmly and durably in the order of natural and necessary vocations is to do it perhaps the highest and truest of all services.

We need grace then, I say, to see our calling exactly as it is; and to this end we ought not to be afraid to strip it relentlessly of all untenable pretensions. There may have been a time when the ministry was tempted to presumption by the almost universal belief that everything spoken from a pulpit was to be accepted as unquestioned truth. To doubt or dispute was something sacrilegious; even mildly to criticise was to tremble on the verge of profanity. The effect of such an attitude was perilous to the congregation, but, unless he was one in ten thousand, it was fatal to the preacher. It may have produced congregations of parasites; it certainly produced a race of divines swollen with self-importance, and too often dogmatic and self-

opinionated to the last degree. The attitude, as I say, of the congregation to the minister tends to determine the attitude of the minister to the congregation. Obsequiousness on the one side engenders presumption on the other. There is absolutely no loss, so far as I can see, in the total disappearance of this false and foolish idolatry of the pulpit and the ministry. The idea that what is said in a church is not subject to the ordinary tests of truth that are applicable to all public and private discourses, that a minister may misstate science, misrepresent history, and mistranslate scripture, and yet be secured by his position, not merely from contradiction but from criticism, would be deplorable if it were true. That it is fortunately untrue is a matter for genuine congratulation. It has made the work of the ministry more exacting ; it has laid a severe restraint upon the lips of the speaker ; it has heightened the sense of responsibility and deepened the sense of duty to the hearer, and the office of the preacher has lost nothing and gained everything thereby.

With the disappearance of the baseless notion of the infallibility of the preacher, there has also vanished the kindred notion of our official sanctity.

Remember once again how daring is our attitude. We are called unto the ministry it may well be by a very simple and humble Church, just a group of poor but decent and devout folk, and on the strength of that call we are to assume authority to speak to men in the name of their Maker. We disown any visible authoritative person sitting in the Vatican, or two authoritative persons sitting at Lambeth. We make no appeal to convocations or councils or synods. We can quote no authoritative declaration of faith, no credal symbols defining articles of belief. Yet we have to persuade an often indifferent and contemptuous world that we have received authority to cast out from humanity the unclean spirit, strengthen the feet of the morally lame and cleanse the very diseased limbs of the moral leper. And remember that in these modern days we do not *look* authoritative. The old outward signs of authority have almost entirely disappeared. There was the majestic wig, the "bands" which no mere fledgling aspirant to the preacher's office might assume, and the noble flowing Genevan gown of silk and velvet at which children and adults alike gazed in awe, reflecting with inward satisfaction that even Solomon in all his glory was not

arrayed in one of these. Moreover the very pulpit, high, solitary, dominant, which stood as the symbol of the splendid isolation and prophetic exaltation of the preacher, is not only now but seldom of its ancient altitude, but has commonly enlarged its base and become a platform where ordinary mortals—mere laymen !—may sit, actually upon the same level as the minister himself. I wonder if you stop to think what all this implies; and upon what other conceptions we announce our determination to rely to produce the impression that ours is after all an authoritative ministry. Let me complete the picture. I suspect sometimes that something of the old consciousness of dignity has gone. Modern ministers may not have the time for the slow, stately, and infinitely imposing procession from house to house in which the sublime and even awful office of the pastor and the catechist used to be performed. We do not even commonly call ourselves "divines"; and some of us would aspire and prefer to be called "humans" did the English language permit. The manner of aloofness, not to say implied superiority—a sort of please-do-not-speak-to-the-man-at-the-wheel style of thing—has disappeared, having become impossible, I suspect,

by the silent growth of other ideas. No, we do not *look* authoritative. I am wont to recall for my own consolation, the great story of how the Pope came in to see Michael Angelo's decoration of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and commanded him to gild the figures. "Gild them?" cried the horror-stricken painter. "Yes" said the Pope, "they look so poor." "Your Holiness" was the reply, "they were but poor men that I painted there. They had no gold upon their garments!" We have no ambition, and we are not even tempted to gild our Apostles. Neither would it trouble us at all that they should look poor. It is not our theory that the men who turned the world upside down were very much to look at. We stand committed by our principles to judge ministers not by what they wear, nor by what they seem, but by what they are, even as we have to learn the equally difficult lesson to judge members of our congregations not by what they *have*, but by what they are.

The fact then that we do not look authoritative troubles me not at all, but we do not always *sound* authoritative. It is impossible to deny that the freedom and candour of modern criticism has in some respects affected the delivery of the modern

message. In former days, if science was so ill advised as to get in the way of the preacher's doctrine, when the sermon was well under way and thundering onward to its destination—as a rule its pre-destination—well, so much the worse for science. If history or criticism opposed themselves to the conclusions of the theologians, then history or criticism must be re-written, or their reputation was gone. The deferential air of theology to science and history and criticism is a very modern affair and would have greatly astonished and grieved our 18th century ancestors, who only permitted science to exist on sufferance, or indeed one might say, on good behaviour.

It was possible at one time for the Rev. Wm. South to call the Royal Society irreligious, and excite not even a mild sensation. To-day the general impression is, that all that science says is gospel, and must be accepted authoritatively, and that what the pulpit says is always to be received on suspicion and subjected to remorseless analysis. And truth to tell, a consciousness of this attitude of the modern mind has affected the preacher. He sometimes limps where his fathers walked with sure and steady tread.

It may not be to his discredit, that in his severe contest with the angel of truth, he has halted on his thigh, nay it may rank as one of the credentials of his ministry, but he cannot take it for distinction. He feels sure that certain things are being shaken that they may be removed, so that he may not be tempted to lean upon them. He is equally sure that the things which cannot be shaken do remain, but he is aware that the public is looking at the things shaken, and saying, if not, "where is thy God?" at least, "where is thy theology?"

He is inclined with a sigh to envy his predecessors their easier task and their less critical and anxious days. And the doubt sometimes affects his own mind, "is mine an authoritative ministry?" You and I as Free Churchmen will at such a time derive our assurance from the manner and method of the One of whom it was recorded that He taught as one that had authority. Certainly it was not the authority of mere office that He claimed. Our Lord came outside the accredited ecclesiastical order, and when men demanded of Him by what authority He did these things, He declined to say, but He asked them another question, which suggested that

even as John the Baptist had divine attestation of his message in the universal response from the conscience and heart of his hearers, so would His own higher ministry prove itself authoritative. Of all the conventional external signs of authority, Jesus used none. We, his feeble and faithless followers, use them, but to use them implies not faith, but doubt. When we mistrust the power and authority of our message, we fall back on externals. Then we don the cope and the mitre, parade the insignia of office and ascend the throne. But no one has ever dared to paint Jesus thus. Peter we may imagine, seeking in a weak moment to impress the crowd with his authority by these means, but never Peter's Master and Lord. So the more we consider the problem, the clearer it becomes that the authority was the authority of self-evidencing truth, and that the appeal was to that inward authority in every human soul to which truth does not appeal in vain. Gentlemen, believe me, no force in this world can command lasting conviction but the sacred force of truth alone.

Gradually, then, as I venture to think, we have come to see that not all the externals of authority put together can make the message of the Gospel

credible and its power acknowledged, unless the contents of that Gospel "find" men and women, unless there is that deep message in it which speaks to the deep of the human heart and wins response and consent. The preacher who speaks with authority to-day does so not because he is an official in some ecclesiastical system, however majestic and historic; he does so, because he feels himself deeply rooted and grounded in an infinite and universal moral and spiritual order. You remember the amusing incident of the officer of the law in Boston, himself a little man, sent to arrest a very big culprit. When the huge offender looked down upon his insignificant would-be captor he threatened to shake him. "If you shake me," was the little man's undaunted reply, "you shake the whole State of Massachusetts," and, in point of fact, there is a Christian message which the humblest city evangelist can preach with authority to the wealthiest and most learned citizens, for to shake that simple message would be to shake the moral foundations of this world, the divine order of creation itself. It is only necessary that the speaker should not suppose that simply to be dogmatic is to be authoritative,

and that falsehood will become truth if you only say it loud enough and long enough. He must not weaken his authority by making accidentals essentials, and thrusting questionable speculations upon his hearers as indisputable and inevitable truths. He takes the grand elementary beliefs which the New Testament treats as authoritative, and he confidently confronts the reason and heart and conscience of humanity with these. He presents the gospel as a Divine imperative ; he insists that man was made to believe it, and that he must believe it at his peril. This is the commandment of God, he says, that ye should believe in Him whom He has sent. The authority is in the message, rather than in the messenger. We are taught to expect a universal response from the heart of man to the gospel message.

There is just one further point on which I would fain lay stress. More and more I am convinced that in these modern days we get what we do not claim, and we receive what we do not seek. Some ministers, many ministers, make the lamentable mistake of seeking to get their way by standing on their dignity, and attempting to enforce their authority ; as if, while disavowing the priestly and

autocratic systems, we had reserved to ourselves some theory of ministerial supremacy. In Nonconformity we receive deference as a rule, just in proportion as we are not too self-assertive and dogmatic. It is apt to be forgotten that the democratic spirit is nowhere more tenacious of its privileges than in our Churches ; and *as a rule* it is of less account that a minister should get his own way than that the principles fundamental to our Churches should be respected. "I beseech you my brethren," said Cromwell to the Presbytery in famous words, "by the mercies of God to think it possible that you may be mistaken." In regard to all but the few essential verities, there must be on the minister's part a fair and open mind ; and he must not expect or desire to be able to carry things with a high hand. Any suspicion of the dictatorial manner :

> "I am Sir Oracle,
> And when I ope my lips let no dog bark,"

is fatal to harmony in the modern Free Church life. Remember that we are dealing to-day with educated people ; and that unless our whole theory is to go by the board, every member is a priest unto God. I think we should be very respectful of

earnest, well-considered, and prayerful opinion and belief ; and be always listening for the mother tongue of truth, despite the crude provincialisms and even the vulgar dialect of those whose theology is not very precise or scientific. The minister who makes no pretensions to be anything more than a fellow-disciple and student, who does not seek to impose his dogmas and court opposition by a truculent and bull-dog manner, will as a rule obtain far more assent and sympathy and deference from his congregation. The authority I am disposed to lay stress on in closing is *the simple authority of comradeship*. When you enter the ministry, unless you are far less happily placed than I anticipate, you will find more than one in your Church whose shoes you are not worthy to carry, before whose character and experience you stand unshod, as Moses before the bush that glowed with the sacred fire but was not consumed. The highest privilege of some of us has been that we have become comrades in the higher life with such as these. The student minister who, because of the oftentimes cheap and superficial acquisitions of a collegiate course, expects to lay down final truth to these experienced saints and thinkers, and perhaps

proceeds to denounce antiquated notions which he does not himself understand, deserves to fail and will fail. He could only succeed at the expense of our common congregational ideals; and the Church he would build up at last would be a society of parasites, whose intellectual and spiritual independence had been sacrificed to make a little —a very little—pope, and that ugly paradox, a Free Church despot. The reward of a true minister is to have about him a living society of eager, reverent, thinking souls, who look to him as the best-beloved and trusted comrade in the pilgrimage of the higher life and the higher duty; whose presence and spirit have helped to create the atmosphere of freedom in which discussion of truth and conduct can be most real and helpful. It is the minister's business to inspire his people, not to mute acquiescence, but to active and intelligent thought and enquiry. If he is not man enough to say at times, "I don't know," and to plead with Dr. Johnson "Ignorance, sir, pure ignorance," and to confess mistakes and acknowledge errors; and is ambitious to sustain an illusion of infallibility which imposes upon nobody, he is inviting disaster to his cause and confusion to himself. On the

other hand, if he is sensible enough to be willing to learn something, even from the humblest of his members ; if, so far from being ashamed to change an opinion, he will even express gratitude to one or another who has enlightened his darkness, he is likely to attain that unique authority which was once happily confessed to me by an officer of one of our most influential and prosperous Churches. "We talk quite frankly to our minister face to face," he said, "he likes it. Sometimes we object and criticise in the most open manner. But let any outsider dare to find fault with our minister, and we fly down his throat in a moment."

Gentlemen, this may seem to some of you a small point. I can only repeat that, called as you are to the ministry in educated and democratic days, this question of the nature of the authority you are ambitious to claim and to achieve and to exercise is all important. I have seen too many promising ministries wrecked on this rock. Rely, I beseech you, not on any official pretensions, still less on any parade of mere learning. Rely, for you may, on the authority of the self-evidencing truth you are to teach ; and on the authority not of priesthood but of brotherhood, as a comrade with your

people in the higher life and duty. That is my counsel to you, and I believe that if you seek to follow it no man among you will ever have cause to deplore that his ministry is regarded by the multitude as an unauthorised and discredited usurpation, or to lament the day when in his early enthusiasm and conviction he gave himself to the service of the Free Churches.

III.

THE MODERN MIND.

III.

The Modern Mind.

I SAID in my first lecture that we cannot successfully carry the 17th century mind to the solution of a 20th century problem. That is of course not to say that we may not carry a first century Gospel. Our mission is not to change our Gospel, but to get it accepted, to make it credible. We have often observed the difference between Paul's discourse on Mars Hill to the Athenians, and some other of his sermons where he had a different type of intellect to deal with, with different prepossessions, and a different outlook upon life and religion. Paul in this respect, as in so many others, is an admirable model. He is willing to become all things to all men if by all means he may save some. He has not one Gospel for the Athenian, and another for the Syrian, and another for the Roman, and another for the Jew, but he has a principle of adaptation. He has studied his audience. He has that admirable

skill that someone has defined as getting within the skin of his hearers, putting himself in the place of the man he has to convince, and for awhile looking out at things from his standpoint and thinking his thoughts. We can see from the scene at Athens how sympathetically he observed and studied the methods, details, and ideas of the Athenians, and noted points where their religious belief approximated to the Christian. The altar to the unknown God arrested him ; the sentiment of the Greek poet, "We are His offspring," appealed to him by reason of its truth. He wanted to get at the inside of their mind, so that he might know how he could help them, and along which lines they were most accessible. This is what we may call a principle of noble opportunism. The Gospel of Christ is susceptible of infinite adaptations to every variety of human need. When we tell it to a little child we do not use the same language as when we present it to an audience of cultured and critical minds. Yet to the child and to the mature thinker the Gospel is in its essence exactly the same. John Ruskin was perfectly right when he said, "What a little child cannot understand of Christianity nobody else need try to."

I want to put it to you that a pitiable waste both of truth and of goodness is going on at the present time, just for the lack of a frank practical acknowledgment of this principle of adaptation, or if you prefer it, of wise opportunism. The failure of so many of our ministers is, I am persuaded, not that we do not preach the Gospel, nor that our Gospel is not true, nor that it is in any way out of harmony with the best thought of our time, but that we do not sufficiently acquaint ourselves with what the great bulk of our fellows are thinking and saying. The consequence is we do not interest them ; we do not succeed in making them think and feel that our Gospel is at once the most ancient of all truths and the most modern of all messages. Just in the same way excellent people pursue some old-fashioned plan of campaign year in and year out with admirable constancy and pitiable lack of result. It is magnificent, but it is not war. Even the excellence of the saints cannot win our modern battles, if they will not take cognisance of altered conditions and changing needs. It is as much a part of divine service to study the signs of the times, and devise methods of warfare that will help our side to success, as to say our

prayers and cultivate a devotional frame of mind. If opportunism, and what we may call the principles of Christian strategy, were necessary to Paul in the first century, you may be very sure they are necessary to you and me in the twentieth.

Now to come to close quarters. There are two obvious prepossessions of the modern mind of which the modern Christian minister must take account. The one is, in a word, Science; and the other is, in a word, Socialism. The first especially concerns the modern presentation of the Gospel, the latter especially concerns the modern conception of the Church. I think I cannot do better here than use language that is not my own, and put the problem before you in the exceedingly eloquent and suggestive words used by the late Dr. Hatch, in his epoch-making book, "The organisation of the early Christian Churches." "At the close of the nineteenth century the Christian societies find themselves surrounded by new conditions; there are new intellectual conditions and new social conditions. The contingency which has to be faced is that the intellectual forces of the civilised world may be arrayed against Christianity as once they were in its favour, and that the social forces which are draw-

ing men into combination may draw them into combinations in which Christianity will have no part.

"For these contingencies, the Church of Christ is prepared. It survived Gnosticism and will survive Agnosticism. It survived Polytheism and it will survive Atheism. It survived the disruption of European society when the Roman Empire fell to pieces, and it will survive the possible disruption of European Society when, if ever, labour wins its victory over capital and socialism over aristocracy. And if the secret of the past be the key to the future, the institutions of Christianity are destined, in the providence of God, in the days that are to come, to shape themselves in new forms to meet the new needs of men.

"It would seem as though in that vast secular revolution which is accomplishing itself, all organisations, whether ecclesiastical or civil, must be as the early Churches were, more or less democratical, and the most significant fact of modern Christian history is that within the last 100 years, many millions of our own race and our own Church, without departing from the ancient faith, have slipped from beneath the inelastic frame-

work of the ancient organisation and formed a group of new societies on the basis of a closer Christian brotherhood and an almost absolute democracy.

"There are phenomena beneath the surface of society of which it would be impossible to overrate the significance, there is a widening separation of class from class, there is a growing social strain, there is a disturbance of the political equilibrium, there is the rise of our educated proletariat. To the problems which these phenomena suggest Christianity has the key. Its unaccomplished mission is to reconstruct society on the basis of brotherhood. What it has to do it does and will do in and through organization . . . but the framing of its organization is left to human hands. To you and me and men like ourselves is committed in these anxious days that which is at once an awful responsibility and a splendid destiny. To transform this modern world into a Christian society, to change the socialism which is based on the assumption of clashing interests into the socialism which is based on the sense of spiritual union, and to gather together the scattered forces of a divided Christendom into a confederation

in which organization will be of less account than fellowship with one Spirit and faith in one Lord, into a communion wide as human life and deep as human need, into a Church which shall outshine even the golden glory of its dawn by the splendour of its eternal noon."

Having refreshed ourselves with that splendid and prophetic passage from the pages of a book which ought to be read and re-read by every Free Church minister, let us return from Dr. Hatch's last words to his first. He reminds us of a contingency that "the intellectual forces of the civilised world may be arrayed against Christianity?" That is certainly a possibility and a peril. It is fortunately not true as yet, whatever the future may have in store. But will you let me say that it seems absolutely to depend on whether we are going to array Christianity against the intellectual forces of the world. I find it very difficult to understand the modern talk about the reconciliation of science and theology. Reconciliation implies a previous estrangement. You cannot reconcile two friends who have never quarrelled. Scientists and theologians have often had their "tiffs" and have even "hurled the contumelious stone." But science and

theology have no quarrel, and in the nature of things cannot have any. Tennyson asked the question "are God and Nature then at strife?" and anyone must believe them to be so who imagines that God says one thing to the scientist and its opposite to the theologian. That is incredible, but it is well that we should remember that the science of to-day is not the science of a hundred years back. History is literally strewn with the corpses of dead sciences. No changes in Christian theology have been so startling and so fundamental as the changes in scientific doctrine, nor are there to-day wider cleavages among recognised theologians of all schools than among leaders of scientific thought. Yet the facts and laws with which scientists have to deal are the same to-day as they have always been. It is in the interpretation of them that the divisions of opinion arise. That science alone, and apart from revelation, is inadequate is, as you remember, the contention of Paul in the greatest passage in his writings: "Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge and have not love, I am nothing." At the same time there is nothing in the teachings of Paul that can be quoted as slighting the pursuit of knowledge, or the education of the understanding.

There is an assumption which is popular in some quarters against which I should like to warn you, that science and criticism are engaged in a destructive campaign. This impression has produced a feeling of panic among many excellent Christian people. They have not, I think, grasped the fact that the modern mind is essentially constructive; that the spirit of science, of which they stand in daily dread, is essentially conservative. Its doctrines of the indestructibility of matter, and the conservation of energy are characteristic of its inherent faith that nothing real must or can be lost. No theory is less true than the theory that first one great belief and then another is being destroyed, sacrificed to the modern mind. It is half-pathetic and half-humorous to listen to those who declare that they have now no alternative but to "guard the deposit," and who view themselves in the light of a small, forlorn and decreasing company who are now making their last glorious but desperate stand around the central citadel of our faith. Gentlemen, it is no question, to-day, of dying in the last ditch for the few relics of a once glorious faith left to us. Never, it seems to me, in the sweep of the ages has the body of truth grown so marvellously as during

the last forty years. The whole trend of the modern movement has been positive. To-day science is bringing her treasures in ever increasing abundance to lay them at the feet of the Church, to be made her own as new glimpses and revelations of the Divine Father's workings; and Christian men and women are crowding in with new experiences, hints and suggestions, dreams and visions of the unseen; and these combined with the ascertained truths of Nature are beginning to compose the most august system of truth which the human mind has ever been able to comprehend. "Therefore every scribe that hath been made a disciple to the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder who bringeth forth out of his treasury things new and old."

Let me impress upon you that the influence of a scientific age upon theology must be in the direction of certitude—clear, positive assured belief. The note of science is certitude; it is a proving or demonstration of things seen. The note of scientific theology is certitude; it is a proving of things unseen. Do not believe for a single moment that the genius of our age is agnostic. The agnostic stage may be a necessary stage, but it is no

more than a stage. Science in point of fact is impatient of doubt. Its avowed goal is certitude. If science has ever been confounded with nescience it has been ignorantly confounded. The language of agnosticism, if it is used as the last word of science, is in contradiction to the history and spirit of science, which cannot be true to itself and despair of empire, even over the kingdom of the soul. Science, I repeat, is positive, and theology must be positive. It must be based as science is based, upon experience ; it must declare what is known and tasted and handled of the word of life. Because he believes it is possible for theology to be scientific, the true theologian welcomes earnest and reverent enquiry of every kind. He does not call people names, even if they call in question the very foundations of religion, because he believes that they will bear inspection. He does not tremble for the ark of God. He does not think that even a Divinity degree affords such an odour of sanctity that a man's opinions are beyond doubt or dispute who can lay claim to such a distinction. He remembers One who, at the early age of twelve, stood before the learned doctors of the temple and dared to ask them questions. We

shall always remember that some who have done theology the noblest services have been suspected and even anathematised in all the Christian ages. Richard Baxter is not only recognised to-day as secure of his place in any true calendar of saints, but as a wise and far-seeing theologian. Yet one of his biographers uses this quaint description of Baxter's experiences: "The discussion of truth and the agitation of doctrine have always resulted in good to the Church and to the world. Even the waters of Bethesda in the very house of mercy itself needed to be agitated and disturbed to renew their healing power. It is therefore unseemly in theologians that when some Doctor Angelicus descends among them and agitates the settled waters of their dull and stagnant orthodoxy, then always a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered, creep from the five points of their five porches to brandish their crutches against the intruder, or to mutter their anathemas against the innovation, instead of welcoming the benignant visitor, sharing in the healthiness of the agitation, and becoming healed of whatsoever disease they had!" There is much truth and force in this piquant description; but Richard Baxter would

have been the very last man to have claimed that this privilege of liberty and flexibility in the statement of old truths meant that the truths themselves might be called in question. Dean Stanley humorously said of Thomas Arnold that he awoke in the morning with the idea that everything was an open question. It was Dean Stanley's tribute to the fairness of his mind and that quality of teachableness—"the heart of a little child"—which is the leading characteristic of the member of the Kingdom of Heaven. But it would be an insult to Thomas Arnold to suggest that he had no "settled convictions," and that his opinions and beliefs were in perpetual flux. If you had been going out into the ministry a generation or two back you would in all probability have received an exhortation to definiteness of belief after a far more tremendous fashion than is common nowadays. I will give you a sample, taken from an ordination charge delivered to young John Clayton by his father, John Clayton senior, in Kensington Chapel: "I have not language of indignant severity sufficiently strong to express the contemptible cowardice, hypocrisy, and soul-murdering cruelty of those who adopt an indefinite phraseology in order (such

is the plenitude of their prudence and moderation) that none may suspect their devotion, but that a heterogeneous mass of nominal Calvinists and real Arians and Socinians may be assembled, for united they cannot be, in one society. Frost unites sticks and stones, moss, leaves and weeds ; the sun separates them. Into the secret of that frosty liberality may you, my son, never enter, and to the assembly of its advocates never be thou united. . . . . Take care that you do not grow luke-warm and indifferent under the specious pretext of meekness. An unfaithful, accommodating pastor applauds himself for carrying it fair with all sorts of people, whereas this peaceable kind of preaching, in neither condemning heretics and worldly-minded persons, nor being condemned by them, is no other than a sign of his being himself in a state of condemnation and death. That person betrays the truth who ceases zealously to defend it, or to oppose its professed adversaries, either from fear of giving occasion of offence, or through a false love of peace. The shepherd should not only feed the flock but also drive away the grievous wolves."

It must be admitted that the old gentleman's eloquence somewhat over-reached itself in the

closing passages. It was to be a ministry of conversion, and yet he was to drive away the grievous wolves. Indeed, not even his gospel seems to have given him much good hope of the conversion of wolves into sheep, though he was alive to the possibility of the conversion of sheep into wolves by a normal process of absorption and digestion. But, this aside, I am bound to confess that there is exactly the right note in this ordination charge. We are the devotees of scientific theology, and theology cannot be scientific if it is to be based on probabilities and uncertainties. We are in search of certitude; the concession of mere liberty is always a poor thing unless it be accompanied by the recognition of certain established facts and principles. Believe me, gentlemen, John Clayton was right; men are not lifted to higher life, they are not encouraged for serious duty, they are not inspired with the passion for humanity, by negations. Nobody was ever yet redeemed from the power of evil by the revelation of what is not true, but of what is. We need positive belief, scientific truth; we shall need it to-morrow as much as to-day. The Church of the future may be founded on a new statement of

theology—I have no doubt it must be and will be—but it will be a theology that has gained, not lost, in certitude; it will be a theology the truth of which will be more firm and sure, in that the form of it is more flexible. "It is," said Lowell, "the anchored clinging to solid principles of duty and action, that knows how to swing with the tide but is never carried away by it, that we want." Yes, it is true. We shall doubtless have to demand room to move and swing with the tide, but we will never let our anchor drag. We will touch bottom somewhere. Progress, combined with certitude, it is safe to say, must be the motto of the Church to come.

There follows, I think, from what I am saying, that membership of the Church will in the future be judged far less by the magnitude of the creed than by intensity of belief. It is not a question as to whether we believe a great many articles, but whether on a few simple verities we hold convictions with all our soul. Verification for oneself of the foundation truths of revelation will come to be more and more insisted on. It is argued, I know, that this liberty of individual thought and expression must produce anarchy, and present to

the world at large a spectacle for its ridicule—a confusion of tongues such as Babel never produced; and so, of course, it would—but for one thing: the belief which I have indicated to you as the supreme contribution of science to theology, that God is Law, and that what philosophers used to call "the commonsense" of man, "the communis sensus" can be trusted to establish an agreement on all the fixed points of our Christian thinking. Indeed, I am persuaded that it is only by liberty of thought that the world can ever be impressed; and that it will come to pass that sincere apprehensions of the nature of God and the work of Christ will be found to contain such substantial unity, amid variety of expression, as will yet surprise the world into belief. For, gentlemen, I ask you to remember the grievous disservice which fixed creeds have rendered to the cause of Christianity. Hitherto the world has suspected, and rightly suspected, the stereotyped expressions of the religious experiences and beliefs of Christendom. They have concluded that beliefs that do not grow, are beliefs that do not live. It appears to them that we do not know any more to-day about God than the fathers who were

responsible for the Nicene or Apostles' Creed. There is no other institution in the world that has quite so depressing a record. It is our opportunity, as Free Churches, to liberate thought from the ancient moulds. We announce to all that we believe in the communication by God to man of a word that is new and living, and we do not suspect its reality because it comes to us through the medium of strong individualities ; and I am certain the world will yet awaken to see that underneath all these variations, which our differing natures render inevitable, there is a certain great substantial unity of religious faith, which is the strongest possible evidence of the reality of the Unseen and the Divine. A scientific theology does thus become possible, as the result of a broad, accurate, and sympathetic investigation of the religious experience of mankind.

Now let us leave the question of the influence of science on the faith we hold, and turn to the second great prepossession of the modern mind, and ask what is likely to be the influence of the ideal of socialism on the Church organisation. Please understand that I am not speaking of socialism as a political or industrial theory, but as

the recognition of the social organism, and its claims upon the individual life. According to Dr. Hatch, it will be our business "to change the socialism which is based on the assumption of clashing interests, into the socialism which is based on the sense of spiritual union." To that ideal these Congregational Churches of ours must in the nature of things be a valuable contribution. If it were necessary to define to an outsider what we understand by a Church, might we not say that a Church is a home in which certain great spiritual beliefs live and grow. *There* faith is to be most vigorous and active ; *there* all truth is to find a welcome, for this is to be an organism inspired by the very life of God, interpreting and incarnating the will of Heaven, that it may be known and done throughout the world. I think you will see that the modern Church must aim at inclusiveness and not exclusiveness ; and for this reason we have agreed that the body of Christian truth is henceforth to be determined by no college of cardinals, no diet of ecclesiastics, no Westminster assembly of divines, no pope, no bench of prelates, no congress, no union, no conference, but only by the universal consciousness of God

and His revelation in Christ in all spiritually-enlightened men and women. If so, it may freely be concluded that, while certain temperaments may find a more congenial home in certain orders of Church government or systems of Church ritual, the limits of no single denomination will be wide enough to embrace all varieties of spiritual genius. I imagine that, as in the past so in the present and the future, we shall need varieties of denominational systems and varieties of forms of worship if we are to elicit and to cultivate all those gifts of spiritual insight and power, which distinguish the universal family of Christ. It does not seem to me to be likely that we shall discover a uniform order of Church life, or Church worship, or Church government, which will become the basis of a scheme of comprehension, such as shall make possible a single organised Catholic Church. Nor, I confess, were it possible, would it seem to me to be desirable. But that, if the spirit for which I have been pleading were to prevail, it would so transfigure the conceptions of all our Churches, as steadily to produce that sense of spiritual union, which Dr. Hatch predicted must be the foundation of the Church of the future, seems

to me to be beyond a question. Of course, I need hardly remind you that the re-union of Christendom is a phrase that has had, and still enjoys, a certain vogue. Not many years have passed since certain notorious conferences were held at Grindelwald. In that genial and salubrious air, robust and vehement denominational partisans were brought together; and when they had been emotionally treated with scenery and coffee, they were led on to make certain concessions, in consequence of which their brethren at home prepared a bad half-hour for them on their return to these islands. A certain militant Methodist, dear to fame, went so far as to say that he would himself be re-ordained if it would re-unite the Churches; and there seemed to be some feeling that it might. For myself, I cannot believe that there is anything substantial in this kind of talk. If Christendom can only be united by the surrender of principle, and the sacrifice of conviction, we had better make the best we can of our present "unhappy divisions," and cultivate the sense of spiritual union.

Let me say again that the realisation of spiritual union will be made manifest in far greater

catholicity of Church method. I mean by that that the comprehensive character of the Church will lay upon each several Christian community the duty of providing some outlet for the varied gifts and tastes and tendencies of all the members. What is so utterly foolish and wrong to-day is that we endeavour to compress all individualities of character into a few stereotyped forms of Christian work. Instead of that, it behoves us to allow character to express itself in form, so as to give fullest play to natural idiosyncracies and gifts of temperament. That is the only sure way to the realisation of the true ideal of a Catholic Church, and when the end and aim of all is seen to be the fullest expression of that which the Holy Spirit has created and cultivated in all of us, so that the gifts divine may not be wasted or suppressed, we shall begin to lose the old odious conception of the word secular, and to realise that that only is secular which is selfish and sinful, and all that is good and pure and honourable and lovely and of good report is sacred and divine.

And that brings me to the last point with which I am going to trouble you to-day. The toleration, nay, the encouragement, of all that is distinctive

and peculiar in the Christian men and women whom we have drawn into association through appeal to the sense of spiritual union, is of course only possible in an environment and atmosphere of *brotherhood*. Brotherhood, then, is the greatest word of the Church of the future ; and it is to be no cant term used in florid concealment of the absence of the genuine article, but it is to be the message of the Church's life even more than of the Church's lips. Brotherhood means confidence. The hateful suspicion that is lynx-eyed in the detection of all that may be construed as heresy is altogether foreign to its nature. Brotherhood means deference, the recognition of the rights of another to hold with equal sincerity opinions other than one's own. Let us remember, gentlemen, with pride, that the old Independents were the first men in England really to believe the creed that is, thank God ! the alphabet to-day of our civil and religious constitution—the creed of the dear old priest in Praed's poem—

> Who held in spite of all his learning
> That if a man's belief is bad
> It will not be improved by burning.

In other words, if error exists and is honestly

believed, argument, and not excommunication and persecution, is the proper method of treatment. And, once again, remember, gentlemen, that this brotherhood, based "on the sense of spiritual union," is a large thing. It cannot be the brotherhood of a coterie, or a clique, or a sect. I can never forget that before the Apostle said "Love the brotherhood," he said "Honour all men"; you cannot found a Christian brotherhood at all by breaking with the brotherhood of man. But just as a true family life is the best home for the cultivation of the larger sympathies, this intense affection of certain spiritual families becomes the incubator of all true philanthropic and ardent humanities that yearn to reach and touch and bless and save the life of mankind at large. Indifference may be a fruit of agnosticism and indecision and incertitude; but the fruit of certitude and faith in regard to the Christian verities is active humanity as well as concord and peace. Therefore I hold it true that all the life of man—his political life, his social life, his literary and artistic life, his industrial and professional life, will, equally with his ecclesiastical life, be penetrated and dominated by those great

spiritual ideas which, as we have agreed, find their home in the Christian Church. Such a Church as I have tried to sketch seems to me to be worth praying for, and waiting for, and working for. A Church with such a passionate enthusiasm of faith, a Church with such a growing certitude of truth, a Church with such a noble catholicity of basis, a Church with such an absolute liberality of thought, a Church wherein, as Dr. Hatch said, methods of organization and details of ritual are of less account than fellowship with one Spirit and faith in one Lord; a Church which touches life in all its varied aspects by the manifoldness of its methods of Christian work; above all, a Church where no difference of opinion nor diversity of operation can interrupt the brotherhood and fellowship which is based on the sense of spiritual union; such a Church is one that may well enlist the loyalties and enthusiasms of those younger ministers who, in the providence of God, must guide and shape the Churches of to-morrow.

Gentlemen, I will make you a confession. I am one who has felt his ministry a very arduous charge in our difficult and anxious days. At its outset I determined deliberately to seek to liberate

myself from old forms of speech and the tradition of the elders, and try to think out my own faith beneath the guidance of the Spirit of God in my own terms. The result has been that, as I humbly thank God, I have been led step by step to a deeper appreciation of the substance of nearly all those great doctrines which have chastened and consoled, strengthened and inspired the souls of the saints in all the Christian ages. Keep an open and reverent mind, and star after star will take its place for you in the spiritual firmament.

I have been in a country where the old paths are gone. Earthquake and volcanic eruption have blotted out the very trace of them. But they told me that they were made in the first instance by men who read direction in the stars. And now that the man-made tracks have disappeared, the people are learning once again to turn their faces upward and travel by those eternal facts.

Well, gentlemen, there have been agitations and eruptions in the world of thought. They tell us that certain formulas no longer serve. We cannot go this way now, or that. But what if it be God's plan by the obliteration of man-made tracks

to turn our faces heavenward? There are always the stars. No paroxysms of earth can ever shake those facts of God. The fact of Christ and His salvation and His glorious redemptive work in time no criticism can affect, save to make it more divine and wonderful. And He seems ever to say to us, in words that I have sometimes thought are the most satisfying of all the great Evangel, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

IV.

THE SUBSTANCE OF MODERN PREACHING.

IV.

The Substance of Modern Preaching.

WE see our modern preacher, keenly sensitive to the atmosphere of his age, sharing to the full the prepossessions of the modern mind, bravely repudiating the externals of authority, and deciding to trust absolutely to the self-evidencing truth of his message, addressing himself to the very complex and exacting, but infinitely fascinating problem that modern society presents. As he holds no theory of the sacramental virtue of infant baptism, or of confirmation, or even of communion, he realises with the apostle that the main burden of his ministry is to "persuade men." He has to say something to them that will make them ashamed of the life they are living, and seek grace to abandon it for a better one. He sees every man and woman the object of the sublime strife of two worlds, and he has to fling his own personality into the scale that holds the divine influences, so that the final decision

may be for eternal life. I do not know how to represent to you my own sense of the thrilling possibilities of the preacher's opportunity. A novelist once congratulated me on, as he was good enough to say, brightening up the Tottenham Court Road! "Your evening service," said he "is almost as interesting as a theatre!" Gentlemen, I must tell you as I told him, that if I could not make my evening service more interesting than a theatre I would not hold a service. For think what a scene it is. It is the most sensational of all dramas. Men and women who have been living in midnight blackness of despair are there, and the light is breaking across their faces. Souls are leaping out of doubt into faith. Hope is rushing back to dreary hearts like the sea at the full tide. The preacher looks across the faces of his audience and knows that for a breathless thirty minutes eternity will hang upon the issue of his speech. No matter how simple be the meeting house, like that upper room where humble men and women met with and surrendered to the Power that was to turn the world upside down, there may be inexpressed, authentic scenes of mental illumination and spiritual transfiguration the influence of which can never die. Who is

there at such a moment in the wide world for the preacher to envy? He is about to be used to do that which Parliament cannot do. He is offering to all men that which all the gold of Johannesburg cannot buy. On the faithful discharge of his sublime duty, the everlasting happiness and well-being of many in his audience may conceivably depend. There is a humble mission room in the Bowery at New York to which reporters and literary men went regularly for 'copy.' It was the most sensational place in the city. Miracles happened there nightly. No stage performance of imaginary revolutions in human life; but actual revolutions, and the transformation of brute beasts wearing the human form unto children of God, new creatures in Christ Jesus. Literary decadents, surfeited with sensation, so sick of the scenery and situations of the playhouse that they had come to loathe them, suddenly found themselves interested and even excited by the amazing human interest of that genuine mission work. It is the power to do these things that we all covet. The only pardonable sensationalism is sensationalism of this kind. To entertain people is nothing; to instruct people is something, but to convince and convert people is

everything. I am often painfully haunted by the fear that the day of the Gospel's romance is over; that the history of Christianity is ceasing to be a majestic epic, and is becoming a dull and tedious chronicle in prose, and not very good prose either. The question I ask myself is, whether the light is off the face of the preacher, whether he does carry to his public work a breathless expectation, and face his audience with all the primitive conviction of the co-operation of the supernatural. Has he lent too attentive an ear to some dismal pseudo-scientific requiem chanted over the age of miracles? Has Matthew Arnold persuaded him, or half-persuaded him that "miracles do not happen?" and has some lesser Arnold added that they never did or could? Has he concluded that to inform his hearers of the composite character of the book of Genesis, or the engaging possibilities that certain New Testament books have been credited to the wrong authors, is filling his vocation and preaching the Gospel? Would he be astonished, and would his fellow-members be astonished, if at the close of his sermon someone who had been groping in darkness, were to be so transported with emotion, as to make public confession of his changed experi-

ence, "glorifying and praising God." Would not the friends of such an one be likely to advise him to consult the family physician, and ask him whether he thought it was the liver or the nerves? Am I not right in saying that gradually a creeping paralysis has destroyed something of our splendid confidence in God and expectation from Him? We have a feeling that it is asking too much of the twentieth century to expect that even *one* should return to give glory to God.

And of course, as Coleridge has it,

> We receive but what we give!

We get what we expect; we win, as a rule, the victory we fight for; we arrive at the goal we seek. If our main business is to indicate in chaste language our very substantial doubts and our equally subdued hopes, if all we have to offer to man is a very sober and modest faith, and one with no glory and radiance about it, we shall certainly reap as we sow. Our congregation will not kindle to our ministering; and minister and people will continue to dwell in the half-lights of an autumnal or even wintry evening. Surely I need not remind you that the substance of the Gospel is

a glorious assurance, its music is the sound of a trumpet, a clarion note that makes the hearers leap to their feet with a rush of patriotic feeling, grasping at their weapons to prove their citizenship and their devotion to the true Fatherland. To the preacher the Gospel is as the fabled Prince who has found his Princess in our humanity, beautiful but wrapt in a sleep that looks like death and that has lasted long. The mission of the Gospel is to bid humanity awake beneath the touch of Love. As Tennyson cries in his exquisite poem on that old romance,

> O Love, thy kiss would wake the dead!

Gentlemen, it does seem to me more and more that it is useless for any of us to go out into the ministry unless we realise this possibility and cherish this confidence. Nay, it is worse than useless. It means bitter disappointment and vexation of spirit. The ministry is either the highest or the lowest of all vocations. If it ever resolve itself into a mere struggle for temporalities, and the one who holds it has consciously or unconsciously surrendered his last hope of that Pentecost which will transfigure his flock, and give him the unspeakable reward of souls for his

hire—I say if it ever become that, I know not the condition of life so menial that such a minister might not choose it in preference. Do not misunderstand me. There is always room for the doubter in the school of Christ. The first Apostles were once men of little faith. Christ, we are sure, never despises

> The lame hands of faith that grope
> And gather dust and chaff.

He acknowledges those who "faintly trust the larger hope!" But in the nature of things these cannot aspire to a place in His ministry; seeing that the utmost they could hope to do would be to lead some souls uncertainly along in the twilight of experience. Before you cross the frontier you must be possessed of your passport. It is as far from my thought as anything could be to suggest that you must be cocksure on every subject under Heaven. I shall say more about that bye and bye. But the ministry is no place to preach our doubts, and air our mental disquietudes. Some ministers are like nothing so much that I know as those dear old ladies whose one satisfaction in life is to talk to you about their diseases, and to assure you that the doctors said that they had had in-

numerable complaints in a more aggravated form than any of their neighbours. It may be necessary that we should pass through some form of spiritual measles, and it may be probable that we shall even encounter more formidable fevers at a later stage, but a wise man is reticent of these things and makes as little of them as he can. To brood over them, and publish his symptoms with pride, is a morbid business, and is apt at last to create in his long-suffering hearers a sentiment of sorrow that the patient had made even a partial recovery from so grievous an affliction.

Gentlemen, you remember Dr. Maclaren's advice to young ministers: "Consume your own smoke." I do not deny that there are some in every congregation who find doubt interesting, and for whom a strain of melancholy in the preacher has a positive fascination. There is also a subtle self-flattery when the minister suggests that to go deeply into things, and reject the cheap and superficial optimism of average Christian believers, is proof of a profound mind. The man whose main intellectual conclusions are critical and sceptical may be entitled to all respect, but need it be said that he is out of place in one of

our pulpits. Our people, God knows, have doubts enough of their own. They do not need the addition of our burden to the one so many of them are wearily carrying. They need the inspiration of faith ; they need courage and hope, pardon and peace and joy ; and nobody's doubts that ever I heard of produced such fruits as these. It goes without saying that no man will risk and venture much on a "may be" or a "perhaps." The "verily, verilys" of the Gospel of Christ alone are the right commissariat for our great campaign.

I am coming to a detailed consideration of these "verily, verilys" shortly ; but, before I do so, there is another problem about which I am not content to say nothing. The substance of modern preaching concerns us vitally ; but it is surely not less true of the substance of modern prayer. If a minister of Christ in the Church of Rome or the Church of England be at all affected by the sceptic spirit, and if he limps where his fathers trod with sure and steady tread, the language of the liturgy will probably conceal it. He buries his personality and cloaks his opinions in the chaste and cultured archaisms of our ancient collects, and nobody need know whether the

traditional language on his lips does or does not express the secret convictions of his soul. He may regard himself simply in the light of a clerk whose duty it is to present to all and sundry who may be able to avail themselves of it, the vehicle for their religious devotions. But if you or I have any secret doubts the language of our prayers will betray us. We cannot screen our conviction or lack of conviction by the use of forms of speech belonging to an age of faith. Unless your prayers are appallingly wooden and formal and stereotyped, they will reveal your interior soul even as your sermons cannot do. It used to be said at the time of the war that, from a scientific analysis of the extempore prayers of any Free Church minister, you could infallibly deduce where his political sympathies lay. I can quite believe that the nature of a minister's public petitions might indicate his attitude to the new theology ; and for the very reason that what is most sacred and vital to us must out in our prayers. Moreover, I think a congregation is soon able to discover what is our conception of prayer, and whether some modern scientific speculations have at all affected our belief in it. A problem you can hardly shirk is what

may and what must not be made the subject of public petition? Some ministers make it a rule to study the most general language in their addresses to the Almighty; others condescend to the most minute particulars, as if they felt the necessity of leaving the All-Wise no possible excuse for not knowing exactly what is in their mind. Some hardly ever forsake the abstract for the concrete, and some confine their prayers to the region of specific supplication for concrete benefits. It would be unwise of me, and very disloyal to our Free Church theory of liberty, if I were to suggest that our diversities of temperament should not express themselves in our prayers as much as in our sermons. But when I hear certain criticisms advanced confidently in the name of science to the effect that, as we cannot alter the course of nature, we cannot consistently pray for recovery from illness, or for a good harvest, and so forth, I confess I am concerned lest we should give away the very privileges of worship, and so impoverish the dearest of all relationships, that prayer would henceforth be a timid and halting business. If the theory that we can not ask our Heavenly Father for the supply of our natural

wants, and the fulfilment of our natural desires, should come to prevail among us, I believe the English people would look back with wistfulness to the Litany and the Book of Common Prayer. The supreme aim of prayer is to bring men to God, and establish the filial relationship. It would be better that, in our simplicity and blindness, we should ask of Him a thousand impossible things than that we should never come to Him at all to pour into His ears our multitudinous mortal needs. Let me suggest to you one consideration on this subject: Unless our records err, our Lord on one occasion gave this counsel to His disciples, "Pray ye that your flight be not *in the winter.*" Why should the disciples be encouraged by their Master to be so very definite as to offer a prayer which suggests to some modern minds a desire to lay down what the weather was to be, and so dictate to the Almighty His government of the universe. Of course, gentlemen, our Lord's intention was that these defenceless disciples of His should shelter themselves, with all their fears and forebodings and poignant human needs, within the will and love of their Father God. With one single illustration taken from the book

of my own ministerial experience, I will leave this part of my subject. I was once sent for to the death-bed of an old Christian saint who in his last hours had been much perplexed and troubled in his mind. He was apprehensive lest amid his pain he should lose his conscious hold of God. He was haunted by the dread of decaying faculties and wandering thoughts. He told me that he felt he was in God's hands, and he had been doubting whether he ought to appear to distrust God's goodness by any positive petition for material blessing. It was then that this neglected text came to my mind, and I remember holding his hand and whispering in his ear, "Pray that *your* flight be not *in the winter*." That he understood me I knew from the quick pressure of his hand and the affirming nod of the head, indicating that the Master's human counsel as to prayer had satisfied him. Oh! of course it is God's will that we should tell Him all our thoughts and keep nothing from Him, so that no wall of partition may be built up by any group of theorists between our child spirits and His all-wise and all-loving Fatherhood.

And now let us turn from the question of prayer to the subject of preaching. What are we

to preach? Have the centuries attenuated our Gospel? Have we less to say to men of which we are quite sure than our fathers had? In my first lecture I put in a plea for a touch of the heroic in our attitude and activities. It may well occur to us that it is as necessary in regard to our beliefs.

"Go, put your creed into your deed,"

says Emerson; and if our deed is just the incarnation of our creed we shall not get an heroic Church life and programme without an heroic creed. I have sometimes wondered whether Christianity were not too daring a faith for unheroic times such as ours. Certainly you will never get a repetition of the sublime apostolic audacities that once startled humanity, till "all the world wondered," out of the anæmic faith which many Churches and Christians exhibit. No man can act with real force and animation when his veins are depleted of their life-blood, and heart and pulse beat feebly. "Faith," said Tolstoi, "is the force of life." It is of course the soul of all preaching that ever effects anything. And it is for this very reason—let us make it clear—that we demand the freedom of faith. I cannot but hope that in this respect you

will make your position very plain from the first. Our objection to the creeds that are simply a bundle of dogmas is because they *contract* faith, they do not expand and strengthen it. We do not reject certain historic formulas because they express too much, but because they express too little; not because they are too large for us to-day, but because they are too small. They are permanently condemned by the mere fact that they are finite statements of the infinite. No one who has ever attained, however imperfectly, an authentic faith in an All-Father, will regard a creed as other than a thin, poor, halting, broken, makeshift attempt to utter the unutterable. Surely it is not an unworthy claim we make, but rather the worthiest possible, that all the creeds put together with which Christendom has ever been blessed, or cursed, cannot express the hundredth part of what the humblest and simplest Christian does verily believe about God and Christ and Salvation and Eternal Life.

If in regard to these central experiences no creed is or can ever be adequate, there are included in all the historic symbols certain profound theological speculations which can never be wholly verified by experience, and on which every young

minister has a right to reserve judgment. You will be well advised to claim that right. We do not belong to the Churches which require of the beardless curate and probationer a solemn and exact consent to an elaborate and complex, and often highly controversial, scheme of doctrine. Some Christians there are in the world who like to hear children in the Sunday School lisping assent to the most profound conclusions of the Apostle Paul, glibly affirming beliefs which the wisest and oldest Christian saints have entertained with fear and trembling. But all that is unnatural and unconvincing ; and I venture to say the ordinary listener feels it to be unreal. If the only thing that can make a ministry powerful is the strictest determination to speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, then it is worse than useless to make pretence of believing what we have had no experience to confirm. It was actually proposed in a Congregational assembly to give a sort of formal sanction to a custom common in the Church of England—the custom for young ministers to read someone else's sermons. A young curate once complained to me that a churchwarden in his Church had remonstrated with him on the length

of one of his sermons. I ventured as delicately as I could to hint that some of our sermons are felt to be too long even by ordinarily patient people; and that perhaps this particular sermon was not of average interest. "Oh," he replied at once, and without any diffidence, "but it was; it was one of Liddon's best!" Well, for my part, I no longer wondered that the sermon seemed long and tedious to the hearers—not because from Liddon's lips it was not entrancing, but because Liddon's head on an average young curate's shoulders has something non-natural about it. My friend felt only that he was offering the congregation the finest baker's bread, and was amazed to find that they actually would have preferred a poorer quality and less of it, provided only it was home-made and home-baked. For my part I hope the day will never come when our Free Churches will be content to listen to second-hand opinions and experiences, even though they be delivered with rhetorical and elocutionary skill. I hope we shall always demand that men's sermons shall be their own, the genuine product of their own thinking and feeling. There may be interest and pleasure to the hearer from some superior chaste discourse

"by another hand"; but I cannot believe that there is real passion and power behind any utterance that is not minted in the furnace of the preacher's own heart-experience.

I hope I have made myself clear in this part of my subject. If it is true you will accept the fact that the area of theological truth open to you when you begin your ministry will necessarily be circumscribed. As the years go on you may fairly and confidently hope to grow into sympathy with many affirmations in the New Testament which to-day are beyond your comprehension. You do not understand them, and it is better not to pretend to. If people ask you questions, say quite frankly that you don't know. Charles Lamb complained whimsically that a man in his day needed to be "superficially omniscient." But I thank God that is not a reputation you will need to cultivate. It is very necessary on all counts that you should not pretend to know more than you do. It is necessary, as I have been reiterating, that you should know some things very well; that there should not be room for a shadow of a doubt in the mind of one of your hearers that you are preaching truths which you have demonstrated in your own experience.

And now, what am I to say on the principal points of our modern message? For the Christian minister there is one model of method; and that is Christ. In the world to which He came belief was nominal, not actual; morality theoretic, not practical. Both had fallen into contempt and desuetude. The method of Jesus was very notable. He did not offer relief to a distressed faith by demanding the minimum of belief but the maximum of belief. He did not give relief to a distressed ethic by demanding a righteousness that should be something less than the current righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, but a righteousness that should exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. Mankind was to learn that neither faith nor morality becomes easy by being reduced to its lowest terms. Morality will never be saved by a process of impoverishment nor faith by a process of attenuation. If a low standard of morality prevails, the remedy is not to lower it still further, but to raise it higher. If men cannot keep a little fire of faith burning in the grate, the remedy is a more generous fuel. Jesus saw that for the current faith and righteousness men and women would not even suffer trifling inconveniences; but for the

nobler faith and the larger righteousness they would live, suffer and die. Debase your currency and you lose credit. Purify it and credit returns. Lower the standards of the Church to the standards of the street, and you do not gain the esteem of the street. Faith lives by its amplitude ; righteousness by its elevation. Whatever changes are necessary in our preaching must be only in the direction of calling in these light coins in the interests of a worthier currency. If your hearers are bound to notice that your presentation of a Christian doctrine is different from that of your predecessors, at least they must see that you have not impoverished the doctrine, but that on your lips it is an appreciably greater one. Let me illustrate my meaning by specific instances.

(1). Take first the modern conception of God. The conception of God that used to prevail limited Him in His creation to what was known as the world of spirit, and in history and experience to what were known as special providences. Nature was either immoral or unmoral. God no doubt had made nature, but, unless it were occasionally to interfere, in order to correct or disorganise nature for some providential purpose, God had little to do

with the machine He had made. His activities were for the human soul. The flesh was the residence of all evil, personal and impersonal. As for human life and history, God touched it every now and then, and these interferences in our destiny were called special providences. They were moments when God's love and care became intense and particular—wonderful oases in the desert of our human story. Now that was a faith that could not live. Either humanity would, in ceasing to believe it, cease to believe anything, or a worthier and more adequate faith must be offered to it. As science disclosed the amazing unity of the world in organic and inorganic nature, the vision of God immanent in all things and all forces came to its own. As the myriads of worlds multiplied and grew out of what had been conceived to be void space, the majesty and glory of God became as overwhelming as had been the sense of His nearness and eternal activity. Whatever may be said in criticism of the modern conception of God, it is a far ampler and grander idea than the old one. Faith is being saved, not by a process of impoverishment, but by an exaltation and enlargement of belief.

(2). Take again the modern conception of Christ. Dr. Fairbairn, as you know, once declared that the theology of our generation is represented by the phrase, "a return to Christ." Let us see what this means. It is, of course, a mere platitude that the Roman Catholic Church removed Christ so far beyond all human apprehension and contact, that a whole order of saintly intermediaries had to be introduced to bring humanity into touch with Him. In this way the ancient lament had found modern application : "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." But there is another way in which Christ has been lost to the world. Henry Drummond said, "He was made a dogma ; a theological proposition." Again and again in the bitter and barren agitation of theological dispute, the glorious personality of Christ has been in danger of becoming altogether obscured. Moreover, at times, careful only to establish His Deity, men have been afraid to insist on His humanity. In their fear of one heresy they developed another ; they became heretics to the humanity of Jesus. But, I repeat, that faith cannot live. Now that we have come to care more for truth than for formulas, we insist that we cannot

do without this glorious Humanity of the Saviour, in which we discover more and more the fulness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person.

(3). Take, again, the modern conception of Sin. Gentlemen, I am perfectly satisfied that any preaching to-day that lessens the guilt of human transgression and removes the accent from man's responsibility, is not only false, but fatal. The word "Sin" is not going to drop out of the Christian vocabulary, nor the cry, "Father, I have sinned," cease to be the deepest emotion of the soul. The only difference is that to-day we are pressing upon the consciences of men social responsibility for sin, and the social consequences of sin. Heredity may teach us, and does teach us, how the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children through many generations; but that is to give us an even more lurid vision of sin, its power, and, if one may say so, the length of its arm. Every generation witnesses a new illumination of the Christian conscience, and customs and habits that have been allowed to exist are henceforth condemned. Here, too, the Doctrine of Sin will gain in authority by being strengthened and enlarged.

(4). Take, again, our modern conception of Salvation. It is perfectly true that when we speak of salvation we use the word in a different sense from the use made of it a generation or so ago. But we mean by it not less, but more. Salvation in the old signification meant making sure of heaven. It had reference to deliverance from punishment hereafter, and the inheritance of happiness beyond the grave. The question, "Are you saved?" meant, are you safe so far as eternity is concerned? Now, as I conceive it, salvation means that still; but it means more than that. To us it covers time as well as eternity. It means the life that now is. It means character purified and sanctified; and it means society transformed. Moreover, the old term, "salvation," had too frequently reference only to that principle in man which was called spiritual. It did not mean then the salvation of the whole man—body, soul, and spirit. The sometime mistake of the theologian of failing to see the body for the spirit, has been almost as mischievous as the mistake of the materialist who fails to see the soul for the body. We affirm to-day that unless a man present his body a living sacrifice, a pure temple, that

man is not saved. Salvation is too majestic a term to be made the shibboleth of a school. We must try to rescue it from those who, in the spirit of the Athanasian Creed, are more anxious to deny the possibility of it to others who do not "believe faithfully" their definitions, than even to guarantee it to those who do. We aspire to make it less credal than moral, and to guarantee it in God's name to all who come unto Him for life. The little belief cannot live; it is the enlarged faith that will triumph and win the allegiance of to-morrow.

(5). But take, again, our modern conception of Inspiration. I have heard in my time a great deal of talk about abandoning the belief in inspiration. But I am sure I am within the mark when I say there is no school of Christian thinkers deserving the name who would dream of such a foolhardy retreat. Only a larger theory has been demanded, and must be conceded. The old theory implied that inspiration ceased when the last word of the New Testament was written. The new theory refuses to believe that "our God is dumb, that He can speak no more." The old theory taught us that prophetic *words* are inspired;

the new theory teaches us that holy *lives* are inspired. God, we hold, inspired Reformers to live and Martyrs to die. His Word stands uttered in Bunyan's pages, but it was also eloquent in Bunyan's sacrifice and moral courage. If I am asked whether I believe—

> That to no mortal
> Heaven e'er oped its mystic portal,
> Gave no dream or revelation,
> Save to one peculiar nation?

I say I do not believe it. I believe there was inspiration for Socrates and Plato, Buddha and Zoroaster. But I believe the perfect and final Word remained for the life and lips of Jesus. Faith in the old, narrow, inadequate theory of inspiration cannot live. But the larger faith no criticism can kill.

(6). And, finally, take our modern conception of the destiny of mankind. I can hardly bring myself to refer to the belief general in the middle of last century, that all the heathen who had never heard of Christ were lost for ever. There is a letter of Livingstone's in which he refers pathetically to the difficulty he felt in holding that creed in the face of the lost heathen populalation. And not only so, but the current doctrine

of the elect tended to the belief that only a comparatively few would be snatched as salvage from the wreck of humanity. Gentlemen, I do not stand here to say that the destiny of evil is at all clear to me. I feel such a horror of its power of resistance to light and love that I dare not dogmatize in regard to its future, awful and mysterious as I feel it to be. But we have discovered to our shame that we have largely ignored the sayings of greatest hope and most blessed promise: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* men unto Me"; "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the *world* through Him might be saved." These sayings, whatever they teach or do not teach, forbid us to think that the sublime issue of Redemption is in the salvation of a mere handful of saints. That belief cannot live.

I want to say, as I close, that faith lives by its daring, by its sublimity, by its immensity. Righteousness to live must be more than the righteousness of the man in the street. The conventional righteousness of society cannot live, or save the life of a city or a people. Unless we exceed the righteousness of our

modern scribes and pharisees, we shall never ourselves see, or help others to see, the kingdom of heaven. In the same way, faith must justify itself by its eagle heart. It must grow in quality and force ; the body of Christian belief must, with each successive generation, be ampler and purer. Then we shall possess our century in confidence, and win its loyalty for all the new divine unfoldings and interpretations of that deathless faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

V.

THE FORM OF MODERN PREACHING.

V.

The Form of Modern Preaching.

IT seems probable on the face of it that if the matter of modern preaching must be somewhat different from that of past generations, the form in which our gospel will be preached to our modern hearers will be even more affected. Not that it is possible at any time to stereotype one manner and style of preaching. That would be disastrous. A brilliant preacher once told us how he nearly died of trying to be Jonathan Edwards! He only began to live when he decided to be himself. Nothing could be less like the stately Georgian style of Robert Hall than the racy colloquial style of Rowland Hill. They both flourished at the same time, and enjoyed extraordinary popularity and influence. It would be an ill day for the Free Churches if our preachers all conformed to one type. Nothing fills me with greater satisfaction than to observe and reflect how richly various

have been, and are, our preaching ministries. I think every young minister should try to find time to study the styles and methods of the great masters of the preacher's art, even though we have reluctantly to confess that the printed page is a very inadequate representation of the real sermon and its effects upon the hearer. George Whitefield's most effective discourses would not cause a ripple of excitement if they were to be printed to-day in the "Christian World Pulpit"; subscribers indeed might begin to ask for their money back. You cannot derive from any analysis of them wherein lay that amazing gift which held fifty thousand people spell-bound, listening to the delivery of these often arid pages. John Wesley's sermons are to me an even more insoluble problem. There is evidence in them all of the well-read Oxford man; they abound in classical allusions and literary illustrations. But they are the last sermons in the world I should ever have expected to attract vast popular audiences, and produce the almost unparalleled results which we know to have followed Wesley's preaching. But then the same criticism is as true of speeches as of sermons. You may read the orations of Pitt

or Fox, of Lord Brougham, or even Mr. Gladstone, and find yourself wondering where the entrancing interest of these speeches lay. It is almost impossible to give to the spoken discourse that touch of immortality which distinguishes certain great books, and lifts them into the imperishable world of literature. I shall have something to say bye and bye on this question of style. Meanwhile, you and I have made our choice. We have elected for the spoken word. Our business is not to write books, but to preach sermons. If the sermons should ever be printed, we shall not expect more of them than a fleeting existence among the fugitive and ephemeral publications of our garrulous and wordy age. We do not enter the ministry to be authors, but ambassadors. I shall not dispute with you the old debating problem : whether a preacher ought or ought not to cherish the ambitions of the artist. We shall surely agree that nothing is matter of indifference to us that can help to present our appeal with irresistible force of conviction to our hearers. When we feel the power of a great picture, the reason is never wholly in the theme ; it is at least partially in the treatment ; it is in the artist's skill

to make you feel its reality, and so dominate you by his message that you literally cannot escape him. Now that is, of course, only the effect of consummate art; an art that may be so amazingly concealed, that it leaves you face to face with the effect only; but none the less there would have been no such effect without the art. To make ourselves able to deliver our message like that, we all feel that we would spare no pains with ourselves. Let us then set it down at once that the art and craft of preaching deserves our study, and that we must not be misled by that mischievous phrase, "a born preacher." We need not push that application of the doctrine of predestination too far. A man may be destined in the counsels of God to be a preacher who nevertheless must be expected to make himself one. I dissent from the theory that preaching is something so unique and ethereal that no known rules and laws can be supposed to apply to it. Why should the preacher be so anxious to get away from the fact that on the material side of his vocation he is just a public speaker whose business it is to learn to speak in public well? I say we have chosen our life-work. The instrument we have elected to use in order to

make the world better is the instrument of oratory. It is, I think, on the whole, the greatest of all arts; though it has no permanent embodiment, such as literature, or painting, or sculpture. It is the art by which human revolutions have been wrought. More victories for righteousness and liberty and humanity have been won by the simple power of speech than by all the other arts put together. Even if we had nothing to guide us beyond such lessons of history as are available, we should best promote the interest of the Gospel by training a race of preachers and speakers to expound and defend it with the living voice. That being so, you will agree, I am sure, that the art of oratory or public speech is one that it much concerns you all to study and practise.

Now, even so, it is open to all of us to adopt our own style, although probably we shall be a good deal influenced by the model we affect. In this respect Coleridge's saying is true, "We insensibly imitate what we habitually admire." Great masters of any art always tend to produce a school of disciples; and this has been as true of preaching as of music or painting. When I was a boy in the Midlands, Birmingham was so fortunate

as to have in its public life two men who were worthy to rank among the finest exponents of the art of public speech. When they spoke together at great demonstrations in the Midlands, their audiences had the privilege and advantage of listening to two absolutely contrasted styles, each very near perfection in its order. The one was probably the greatest living master of pure oratory—John Bright ; the other was, of course, Mr. Chamberlain, as absolute a master in his own style—the purely business-like, practical style. The one was a master of that dangerous instrument, rhetoric—the best servant and the worst master that a public speaker can possess. The other forswore rhetoric for logic, and pleaded his cause like a skilled lawyer arguing a brief. In Mr. Chamberlain's speeches there were no flights of oratory, he never soared to those heights of lofty appeal to which Bright carried his hearers ; but he had the scarcely inferior art of so taking his hearers in the toils of his argument that they had no option but to consent. I have instanced these two, because there is here a rough division into those two main classes of public speakers which appeal to our ambitions. Judged by the standard

of art there cannot be a question as to the superiority of the former style. John Bright has seldom in the history of mankind had a superior as an orator. The purple passages, the chaste and forceful Saxon of the language, the consummate blending of humour and pathos, the sudden epigram, the golden peroration—every speech on a great occasion was an artistic triumph. But if you were to ask me the question whether such a noble gift as this was comparable as a practical working instrument for getting things done to the less ambitious and more prosaic tool which either Mr. Cobden or Mr. Chamberlain wielded with such redoubtable skill, I must confess my feeling that the latter is the more immediately practical weapon, and for most of us it is certainly the more possible. I am not going to indulge in any cheap depreciation of rhetoric, which is to the orator what colour is to the painter. Nothing is more glorious than the colouring of a Burne Jones or a Holman Hunt; but nothing is more painful than crude and glaring colours that have no apparent purpose unless it be to startle, and even stagger humanity. Mr. Bright was a great colourist; Mr. Chamberlain a skilled artist in black and white. There is no

reason whatever why any young speaker should be discouraged from the attempt to mount up on wings as eagles, but, I repeat, the practicable for most of us is to run and not be weary, and for all of us to walk—briskly I hope !—and not faint.

I cannot leave this question of rhetoric with no more said, because I have appealed to you already more than once for a touch of the heroic and the venturesome, and it is one of the things that troubles me that our age is tending to become too dull and drab. The age is mechanical ; and we all tend to discount the beautiful and the wonderful and do homage merely to the utilitarian. The glamour of science has so affected us that we have almost ceased to recognise the necessity for the true education of the imagination, our highest and noblest faculty. We filch away the fairy tales from our children, and give them handbooks of science instead. I may be wrong, but I seem to be conscious that the terror of being thought fanciful or sensuous has reduced the average sermon to one dead level—often a high level, I admit. There are perhaps fewer descents to very low regions of bathos, but then there are fewer mountain prospects too. If every valley has been

exalted every mountain and hill has been made low; and even uniform merit and elevation cannot quite make compensation for the loss of those great occasional moments when the preacher climbed the mount of transfiguration, and the congregation knew that it had seen Heaven opened. And, gentlemen, we must admit that if we are men of authentic Christian experiences we cannot tell our story without the prose breaking into poetry here and there. I know it is usual to represent the age as being very intellectual and sceptical, hungering for a "reasonable faith;" that our main business is to devise statements of theological truth that will do no violence to the other theories that the men and women of to-day are believed to have adopted. In point of fact our business is—Revelation. It is not so much to make Christianity *reasonable* as to make it *real*: that is the supreme necessity. It conceivably might be quite reasonable and yet no reality. The dogma of God is eminently reasonable; but I repeat our business is to make God in Christ real to our congregation, and if that is a real experience of ours it will tax the full resources of language to express the grandeur of it. Browning says in *Paracelsus*, "God is the perfect poet."

Granted that every fact of nature is a syllable of the Divine language, there is to be read in the external world an argument for the love and care of God of a purely utilitarian order. But when Jesus held up a crimson anemone and bade His disciples consider it, He was bidding them listen to the rhetoric of the Divine speech. As such, it was an irresistible appeal to the emotions, and to the higher sense of God's beauty. It was a reminder that the men He has made cannot live by bread alone. Gentlemen, it will be a very dull world if there is no place in it for "the lilies of the field." Do not too readily believe that even "the men about town" despise these flowers of rhetoric; or, provided they are *natural* flowers and not *artificial* ones, are insensitive to their appeal. The difficulty is to get men to distinguish between the flowers of rhetoric which are living and natural and consequently welcome, and those which are forced and staring and consequently forbidding and grotesque. The late Dr. Dale used to attribute his conversion to a sermon which he heard by the Rev. John Sherman, of Surrey Chapel. Many years later he heard Mr. Sherman again and prepared himself to listen, as you might imagine,

with eager curiosity and gratitude. He told many of us afterwards what he suffered from the pompous but turgid rhetoric of the preacher. Sherman had a very fine passage, as he thought it, of this kind: "Are you fond of animals? He's the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Are you fond of flowers? He's the Rose of Sharon. Are you fond of precious stones? He's the Pearl of great price." And so on, and so on. Dr. Dale used to say that he struggled to preserve his sense of gratitude, but he could not get over "Are you fond of animals?" That kind of inflated rhetoric has gone to its grave, and we sigh our relief at its disappearance. I gather it has been made impossible by the more educated taste of the public, and our impatience to-day, I am glad to think, of anything like affectation. The sample I have given you was the mere cheap rhetoric of the pulpiteer; and yet there is no question that it had a vogue, and that this very tawdry art often met with marked popular success. It would empty chapels now, but it sometimes filled them then. Only we must remember that there had been some personality and soul behind these trappings. Pulpit oratory, in the days I am thinking of, tended to conform

to a type. They were the days of the triumph of the "period," the days when Hooker and Dr. Johnson set the literary fashion, and what was predominant in literature received the flattery of imitation in the pulpit. Neither do I want to deny that there was often something immensely imposing and impressive in the old style of pulpit oratory. I have myself a sneaking affection for "the period," though I have long since ceased to attempt it. It seemed to suit not ill with the ample Genevan robes, the flowing bands, the white kid gloves, and the full-bottomed wig. I was at one time the minister of a congregation where it was the tradition that the worshippers had never assembled punctually for Divine service since the days when one of the most distinguished and characteristic representatives of that old school was the preacher. Then it was an impressive part of the service to observe the procession of the minister from the vestry to the pulpit. The mere ascent of the pulpit steps was a means of grace. No self-respecting seat-holder would have missed the sight. Such awe-inspiring scenes as these were responsible in Scotland for the universal sentiment that it was a great thing for a man "to wag his

head in a pulpit"; and it has not always been remembered that whether it is an irritating thing for the congregation or not depends on whether there is anything in the head. However, the principal thing for us to take heed of is that, whatever the effect in days gone by, a stilted and artificial style is to-day to the last degree tiresome and tedious. People have neither the taste nor the time for that kind of thing. Moreover in these days of education it behoves us to remember that, while we may still be entitled to the respect due to the specialist in a great and important branch of human knowledge and experience, yet, on most of the theories about which we preach, our congregation is quite as competent to form an opinion as we are; and not the most abundant daubs of colour will make them think our pictures true to reality unless they are.

Are we then to assume that style and form in the sermon are to the hearer of to-day a matter of unimportance? I am very far from thinking so, and I am here to urge you to make yourselves preachers by assiduous attention, not only to the matter, but also to the manner of your preaching. My strong impression is that there never was a

time when, even in popular audiences, the majority of listeners were more keenly alive to, and appreciative of, anything like a literary quality about our sermons. I am not suggesting that they want you to read them two essays on Sunday, composed in graceful English. Against that tendency I protest with all my force. Neither do I forget that obtrusively fine writing is offensive in a sermon; and indeed is inseparable from at least a superficial vanity and egotism. But, gentlemen, it is your first duty to be interesting; and let us realise that, subject matter apart, it is the literary quality of good writing that makes it so absorbingly interesting. You are carried forward breathlessly from point to point. Every proposition is stated with such triumphant lucidity. Not only is it possible to understand the writer, but it is not possible to misunderstand him. What he has to say he says —that and no other thing. It all seems so easy, so pleasant, so forcible, so natural, that you remain unsuspicious of the patience, the industry, the drudgery that have gone to make it what it is. This is the art that conceals art. There is a passage worth your noting in the "Upton Letters," written by that admirable educationist and literary

man, Mr. A. C. Benson, in which he puts into the same category as regards style John Henry Newman and John Bunyan. He says of Newman that "if one had a piece of his writing to turn into Latin prose, the more one studied it, turned it over, and penetrated it, the more masterly did it become; because it was not so much the expression of a thought as the thought itself taking shape in a perfectly pure medium of language." "It seems to me," he says again, "that the only function of a writer is to express obscure, difficult, and subtle thoughts easily." He goes on to say that as a schoolmaster he used to impress upon his boys that "the essence of all style is to say what you mean as forcibly as possible; the bane of classical teaching is that the essence of successful composition is held to be to 'get in' words and phrases; it is not a bad training so long as it is realised to be only a training in obtaining a rich and flexible vocabulary, so that the writer has a choice of words, and the right word comes at call. But this is not made clear in education, and the result on many minds is that they suppose that the essence of good writing is to search diligently for sparkling words and sonorous phrases, and then to patch them

into a duller fabric." That warning could not, I think, be bettered. But it may make for clearness if we consider that success in this matter of literary form is due partly to the careful arrangement of material and partly to the selection of the "inevitable" word. Let me discuss these two points briefly with you.

And in the first place I put in a plea for the careful arrangement of your material. It was my good fortune in my early ministry to have for a friend a very wise and acute deacon, who had been for a long lifetime an influential journalist. On one occasion our pulpit had been occupied by a stranger; and I tried to find out what impression had been produced upon my friend's mind by the sermon of the preacher. He said: "The sermon reminded me of the reply of a well-known dilettantist to a lady who asked him how she should arrange the furniture in her room. He said, 'Don't arrange it at all; let it occur.'" I have seldom heard a more admirable criticism of a type of sermon which is by no means uncommon. All the things that are in it "occur"; they are not there by virtue of any principle of arrangement; and what may have a pleasing effect

in a drawing-room has a very confusing and tiresome effect in a sermon. I do not animadvert here on those gentry whose habit it is to select three anecdotes and a quotation from Browning, and then proceed to string them loosely together; and having fastened the ungainly resultant to some tag of Scripture, hasten to chastise therewith some defenceless and long-suffering congregation. You will, I should hope, in your student days be accumulating great stores of material drawn from your general reading. You will, as a matter of course, keep an every-day book, into which you will transcribe all such passages as seem to you specially striking and quotable. You will resist as a temptation of the Evil One—as I am convinced it is—the impulse to drag in hackneyed quotations and threadbare anecdotes simply as padding, or as rotten pegs on which to hang a string of platitudes. Illustrations which do not illustrate savour of the inconsequence which used to be the traditional privilege of the Sunday School address.

As to the arrangement of your material, I personally believe, and strongly believe—although my creed is dismally at variance with my practice—in the practical utility of the old-fashioned habit of

divisions, if you can get your texts to divide naturally. My texts seldom or never will. Neither has my experience of other people's divisions been by any means uniformly happy. I have been a sympathetic spectator when a text has suffered quite undeservedly a severe compound fracture, and have then listened to the author of the tragedy coldly lecturing on the fragments. It goes without saying that in a good sermon—I do not say an ideal sermon, for we shall never live to preach one—but in any good, sound, average sermon which ordinary people like ourselves can hope to deliver, there should be progress to a goal; and not only should the line of thought be very clear in our own minds, but we should spare no pains to make it quite clear to those to whom we are speaking. Unless you can contrive somehow to build up an extraordinary reputation as a sage, men and women will not trouble themselves to hunt for your meaning through intricate labyrinths of phraseology. They will go somewhere else to escape from your obscurities and involutions, which, I ask you to believe, are not more popular in the pulpit than in parliament; in a preacher than in a leader of a political party. Of course, I am assuming that

there will be a progress of thought in your sermon ; that you mean to get somewhere and aim at producing, shall I say, a cumulative effect. There are some men, I notice, whose aim seems to be to take a text and fling it at their congregation, dinning it into the people's ears with what they imagine to be impressive, but is to their hearers, wearisome iteration. Even an ordinarily dull man can remember a text after three or four times repetition. He does not want you to make a multiple photograph of it ; but to expound and apply it. A competent critic once complained to me that a certain preacher was like a terrier dog with a bone ; he held it up before the audience, and shook and worried it in their presence. For a short time the process was diverting enough ; but after that they were tired and wanted him to have done. I don't say that the terrier may not get his own nourishment out of that bone ; but then no other terriers do. The sound method in regard to a sermon is as easy to lay down in theory as it is difficult to live up to in practice. It is to state quite clearly to yourself what is the central idea of your text or passage ; then to root it firmly in its context, drawing thus upon history and experience to assist

in its elucidation and enforcement ; to endeavour to expound its place in the system of Christian truth, and to insist on its obvious, practical, modern applications. That is, of course, only a general rule, and subject to many exceptions ; but it is a rule which, if you hold in your memory, will save you from any wholly invalid or improper use of material, for which, in your desire to lengthen or brighten a sermon, you may have what Shakespeare calls "an itching palm."

So much for the order of the sermon ; and now for our second point—the use of the inevitable word. Gentlemen, it is not the least embarrassing feature of our time to the preacher that so much emphasis has come to be laid on the fine and delicate shades of meaning which separate the false from the true. The man who is a dealer in words—and that is you and I—need not be finicking or fantastic, but ought to be conscientious in his dealings with them. Words are not only words that lie upon the topmost froth of thought ; they stand for ideas. We have suffered enough, Heaven knows, from looseness of theological expression and crudeness of evangelistic utterance. It is all very well to say that, provided we are

well-meaning men, God will override our mistakes as preachers, and do His work not so much by means of us as in spite of us. I do not see what right we have to throw upon the Deity the task of correcting false impressions that are due to our laziness. If our profession of concern for truth is not cant, then must we learn to weigh our words. This is the first reason why we should not disdain the art which is so precious to the literary and the scientific man—the art of language; distinguishing the right word from the wrong, and carefully calculating the effect of the phrases that are used. I do not appeal for glittering epigrams and aphorisms. These you may leave to the *dilettanti*. They are more often false than true. At best they are diamonds offered to people who are famishing for bread. But if you can put a thing well, the cause of truth and righteousness is surely better served than if you put it coarsely and clumsily. It means time of course; and, judged by the standard of the market-place, it seems a more profitable way of spending time to serve on a committee than to pace your study racking your brains for the right word. But if your first ambition is to be a preacher and teacher of truth

then you must supremely care that what you say is true.

The second great point in reference to this careful choice of words is one I have hinted at already: not only does it evidence the greatest jealousy for truth, but it adds enormously to the interest of the sermon. The power and charm of your message will gain in this way; and remember, I pray you, gentlemen, that it is your business to be interesting. Dr. Dale protested against the notion that "dulness is necessary to dignity." Life nowadays is, as a rule, a hard business; and the men and women who gather to hear you are usually not a little tired and worn. They do not ask, I think, that you should spare them all deeper thoughts; but they do ask that you prepare yourself by study and patience to put truth before them in a way that will arrest the attention and fasten itself upon the memory. It is worth your while to spend an hour a day hunting for the inevitable word, if it will make some true thought the enduring property of your people. Any labour is well spent that will produce that result; for thereto were we sent.

Let me add to this—for indeed it is but another

aspect of the same theme—that it is well, especially in your student days, to study the art of even severe condensation and economy of words. It is not merely that people concede nowadays with some reluctance the minutes that exceed the regulation thirty. That is the last infirmity of ignoble minds, and should be always treated as an infirmity. But I have the feeling that we can, on all but very special occasions, say all we have to say within half an hour if we are concise, and very rigorous with ourselves in reducing our turgid and fluent—or fluid—dissertations to their lowest terms, which in this case are their highest terms! Few things do more to relax the grip of an audience on a discourse, than the consciousness that the speaker is taking twice or three times as long to say something as he need. No doubt this has a certain bearing on the relative advantage of read sermons *versus* extemporaneous sermons. That is to say, it is much more difficult for an extempore speaker to acquire this art of compression than for one who has condensed his material into written form in his study. But it is astounding how diffuse a written statement can be, and will be if a man has a diffuse mind, or has not disciplined

himself severely. Let us treat our congregation with at least enough respect to believe that they are mentally capable of taking in our not over-profound remarks, as a rule, without vain repetitions. One of the most useful practices open to us is to take some extended passage from a speech or sermon and bovrilise it. Make a concentrated extract. See in how few and how strong words you can express the soul and substance of it. Any serious study of the art of saying things tersely and crisply will repay you abundantly, and your future congregation even more than yourselves. There is sometimes, I think, the danger in a theological college, where we are almost painfully alive to the sublime and majestic aspect of our calling, of forgetting what great painters of great subjects never forgot—the value and significance of the minute. It is John Morley's criticism on Edmund Burke that he would have done greater things even than he did if he could have allowed "the detail of the day" to have rested more heavily upon him. We too with our high ideals and our brave schemes may so easily make the mistake of despising the minute. We may be impatient of the drudgery of rigorous composition,

and may only ask an opportunity to speak at large, when in all probability good but vague ideas will unsuccessfully struggle to express themselves coherently. And the candid critic in the congregation will shake his head and murmur "much smoke and little fire!"

One of the obvious and inevitable counsels to those who stand at the threshold of their ministry is to read with attention and sympathy the works of men who are admittedly great masters of style, and try to discover their secret, and by what arts their effects are produced. Some passages, not only of poetry but of prose, should be committed to memory and repeated to oneself, as one might play a symphony of Beethoven, until you know its beauties by heart. Of such prose passages I might instance, by way of example, the conclusion of John Ruskin's "Unto this Last," the description of Oxford in the preface to Matthew Arnold's "Essays in Criticism;" the peroration of John Bright's great speech on the Irish Church in 1869; Abraham Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg, and of course a selection of purple passages from John Milton. I doubt whether it would be wise in me to suggest to you models in the art of sermon-making,

for not only must so much depend on your own taste and temperament, but also on any special sermon you have in view. If you were aiming at a purely devotional sermon it would be invaluable to you if, early in the week, you could read over more than once one of the choicest compositions of Dean Church; if your intention was to deal with a subtle point in Christian ethics you might steep yourself in Newman; if you had in view a vigorous, practical, popular sermon you could hardly do better than invigorate yourself with a sermon or lecture by George Dawson; if, on the other hand, you design to strike a very tender evangelic note, prepare yourself by a course of Samuel Rutherford or Richard Baxter. If you are eager to conquer a tendency to diffuseness, and to gain strength and pungency of speech, I should advise you to study such a book as Meredith's "Diana of the Crossways," and to analyse some of Diana's epigrams. Recall the scene in Diana's *salon*, when someone clumsily breaks a very beautiful piece of porcelain, and the ever-agile wit of Diana is equal to the occasion. "Brittle," she says with a smile, "is foredoomed!" I do not of course suggest that you should be quite so

Meredithian as that ; it might leave the old ladies of the mothers' meeting groping helplessly for your meaning. I only offer it as an example of the art of saying much in little, worthy of study by those who are specially conscious of the opposite tendency in themselves.

I find myself devoting the whole of this lecture rather to the form of the sermon than to the delivery of it ; and must postpone the latter all-important problem till next time. Meanwhile let me offer you a word or two of advice on the vexed question of quotations, and illustrative material generally. In the first place, no form is so bad as a sermon which is merely a series of quotations loosely strung together on a bit of very common thread. Such sermons are made easy nowadays by encyclopædias of anecdotes and quotations arranged under convenient heads. With a page or two of such extracts, evidencing an easy acquaintance with every ancient and modern sage from Epictetus to Rudyard Kipling, the sermon is ready made, especially if we consider that Cruden's Concordance will supply a handful of texts, each warranted to contain the fateful word that is to be the keynote of the discourse. Any impression of

wide erudition which might be produced on an uneducated audience by such a display of other people's fireworks would soon wear off, and give place to dismay. The congregation will soon begin to feel as if they wanted to put up their arms to protect themselves against these pellets of wisdom which are being hurled at them from the pulpit. They will begin to draw conclusions unfavourable to your own intelligence, since you have so little to say on a subject that has provoked so many quotable opinions from other people. But, while no congregation that I ever heard of likes to be thus gorged on game with no simple staple fare at all, the occasional quotation and illuminating illustration is undoubtedly welcome and helpful. I have often had occasion to remark in my own somewhat limited experience of preachers, how narrow seems to be the range from which quotations are drawn for the embellishment of sermons. A few tags of verse are literally worn threadbare ; and they come to be expected and endured with the same stoical cynicism that is evoked by the inevitable election story which goes the round of the constituencies when the destinies of empire are in the balance. It seems incredible

that there is open to us the most magnificent and wealthy estate of prose and poetry enjoyed by the people of any language. But we are acquainted with so limited an area. Let me urge you to be path-finders, exploring some of the fascinating bye-paths of literature ; and you will come back with your arms laden with precious flowers and precious stones that when the happy moment comes you will be able to exhibit, to the delight and benefit of your audience. Remember that all things are yours. You are the heirs of all the ages. You inhabit the Fortunate Isles. There is not a period of history that will not yield you inexhaustible stores of illustration. The biographies of all the great and good, the thoughts of the sages, the ventures of the daring, supply the material by which you will enforce the grand appeal. Possibly now, as you look out in some anxiety towards that unknown morrow when you must begin what is to be a life-long process of giving-out thoughts of faith and comfort and good cheer, you wonder whether the stream will not soon dry up ; or, to use quite another figure which you feel perhaps to be more appropriate, whether the cistern will not soon be emptied, and you

yourself appear to your people as a broken cistern that can hold no water. I beseech you, do not think or talk like that. The inner life of thought is not a cistern but a well ; and even so, the stream that flows forth from the true and living soul in these great and glad days is fed by tributaries from many little hills and majestic mountain ranges : Literature, History, Biography, Travel, Science, Politics, and all the fascinating chronicles of the Church and of religion ; yea, and the ever-changing pictures in this kaleidoscopic life around us—all these are tributaries to our mental and spiritual life. Our task is at once greater and easier than it seems. Courage ! You need not hoard your treasures too jealously, in fear lest there should be no more of them when they are spent. God has a law of His own of supply and demand, and regulates expenditure and income in His own magnanimous way. All we know is that the cruse does not fail, nor the barrel of meal give out. You may be even splendidly prodigal and imprudent. As an old local preacher once said to me, "I never knew a man ask God for a message and not get one." He was right. At least I have had nearly eighteen years of it in London ; and it has

worked out that way. Every Sunday night we have preached our last sermon, emptied our barrel, expressed our last thought, struck our last match, drawn our last cheque. No vagabond in all the world so bankrupt as we. But a few hours later, and we have decided not to send in our letter of resignation, but to give Providence one more chance. You find then to your amazement that your drafts are still honoured. "Ask and ye shall receive ; seek and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened," is statute law of the kingdom of heaven which has not been repealed. The message shapes itself anew in your own soul, to be delivered, we trust, in the power of Him who gave it, to a congregation He has prepared to receive it ; and you with joy and awe realise that He still owns you as His appointed ambassador through whom the treaty of peace is sealed again that authenticates the reconciliation of man and God.

VI.

THE MODERN MINISTER.

VI.

The Modern Minister.

IT is time that we should remind ourselves now that, important as sermons and sermon-making are, the minister is more than his sermons. It was a discovery of the war that, however perfect your armaments, it was the man behind the gun that counted most; and if we succeeded in making our sermons perfect in construction, and irreproachable in theology, we should still have to lay final stress on the man himself. There are not a few people who think that we have won the battle when we have succeeded in casting our guns. Give us a serviceable theology and the fight is finished. Of course this is ludicrously short of the truth, and is almost as grotesque as that other delusion that war is over as soon as you have persuaded the authorities to grant supplies. That is to say if the Church treasurer smiles and reports a balance in hand; if the Church and its

societies are self-supporting, then the goal of success has been attained. Now we must clear our mind of cant and not be afraid of ideals, even the ideals that are most calculated to daunt us because they concern our own character and work. I am going, therefore, to talk to you to-day, gentlemen, about the man behind the gun.

It will be necessary for us to take stock of the minister, not as if he were a being belonging to some other world and breathing some rarer ether, but first of all as an ordinary creature of flesh and blood, with certain exacting work to do which requires for its proper achievement a sound, physical basis of life. The notion that the ideal minister is a pale, delicate, transparent, ethereal person with whom it is impossible to associate the ideas of a healthy appetite or a predilection for fun and sport is, by the blessing of God, being relegated to the limbo of exploded fallacies. Such a picture of the ideal minister would have left the apostles decidedly at a discount. When I think of them and their feats of mere physical endurance in the missionary life they had to live, I see a purpose in the Providence that ordained for them a physical preparation in those hardy duties and

tasks by which muscle and sinew were toughened and strengthened. Bred in the open air, children of the sea and the storm, handling the oar and the rope—there God laid the foundation of health and strength which is so essential for all who aspire to live the strenuous life in His service. Well is it for all of us when we can lay up such solid capital of energy and vitality, banking the gains of a simple, healthful, open-air life. We can live on the interest of such capital in later days. One of the most famous ministers of the beginning of the 19th century was John Angell James, of Birmingham, and on one occasion he described quaintly the three requisites of a good preacher as "bellows, brains and bowels." The latter word, let me say at once, was meant to express the idea of sympathy and tenderness. The three words form a useful division which I intend to adopt; for they may be said to cover the animal, the intellectual and the spiritual equipment for the work for which we are destined.

Let me begin then with John Angell James' requisite on the physical side—bellows. It is here that I should like to say a few words upon the delivery of the sermon, and a few truisms may be

set down first of all. "How shall they hear," said Paul, "without a preacher?" I might respectfully submit to the apostle that they cannot always hear *with* one. It was Mr. Spurgeon, I believe, who said that the first lesson of the sermon on the mount was to be found in the words: "And He *opened His mouth* and taught them." The very first condition of an effective sermon is that the preacher should be well and easily heard; that his enunciation should be clear and distinct; that his manner, as well as his matter, should have life in it. He must remember that he is setting out to master his audience, to arrest the listless, to solemnise the scoffer, to woo and win the prejudiced and the hostile, to move the sluggish and apathetic. It is no use quoting Paul and Apollos to me, and insinuating that Paul, who was no speaker, "an ugly little Jew," as Renan says, "with a stammering tongue," yet produced greater effects than Apollos, the orator, therefore success in evangelism does not depend upon any power of speech. Doubtless there have been and are those of whom one can only say that such was their wealth of conviction and experience that the whole man was eloquent with an authority which

triumphed over every defect of personal appearance or public utterance. But it is the greatest mistake for us to judge of our own possibilities by exceptions. The rule is good enough for us, and of the rule there is no doubt. It is so to co-operate with the Divine Word, whose speech to man we are to endeavour to articulate, that by our instrumentality it may have free course and be glorified. This means, of course, that we are to perfect ourselves, so far as we are able, in the mechanics of our calling, by the most absolute obedience to known laws of health and elocution. I mention the laws of health because every public speaker knows how much depends upon this physical basis of life. There are certain advantages as a public speaker that may be desired, and which we cannot obtain by any amount of practice. "Who of us by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" or as he would sometimes like to do, subtract one cubit from it. What used to be called "presence," sometimes I think a natural endowment and sometimes a supreme accomplishment, is a secret to which there is no known key. Anyhow one can hardly expect to find it a property of youth: it seems to belong by right to "grave and reverend

seniors." If we cannot count on that advantage there is all the greater necessity laid upon us to seize such advantages as are within our reach. I speak now from a not inconsiderable experience when I say that nobody can exaggerate the importance to a preacher or speaker of what the 'varsity man calls "feeling fit." The preacher must be an optimist in the practical sense of feeling up to his work; conscious that he can do it and do it easily and well and without strain. Artists have sometimes told me, what I can quite believe, that they have their days when they feel brisk and buoyant and confident. Work is not labour; it is almost effortless and so victorious. It usually means nothing more than that soul and body are in unison and there is no fleshly clog upon the inward energies. It is so, no doubt, with all work akin to our own. Preaching you must remember is essentially a nervous business—not a *nerveless* business, but a nervous business. If you face your audience with your physical system depleted of its nervous force it is impossible that you should do justice, I will not say to yourself, but to your office. The chances are that you will either be lifeless and listless, or else that in your consciousness of the necessity of making some

great effort you will become shrill and violent, getting on to your audience's nerves in your endeavour to get off your own. All this simply means that you are not "fit." Your lack of "condition" shows itself in the tones of your voice, betrays itself in the unnatural discomposure of your manner and the restlessness and insignificance of your gestures. It is not always easy to make deacons and Church officers realise that this denotes a man who is physically "below par." They regard the minister as a disembodied spirit, who has no business with a nervous system and are apt to suspect that an extra prayer meeting or two would put him right. But if he is a wise man he will hear in such failure as this the suggestion of Providence to close his books, lock his study door, shut down on his visiting list, cancel his committees, and spend a day or two in God's out-of-doors, till nature has given him back the nervous force of which he was bankrupt, and has thus restored the preacher's temperament. Some men I know will raise the objection that if you went off to play golf, or tramp the country side, your people might think you lazy, on which I can think of no better retort than one of Dr. Dale's in another

connection. "If there is any danger of your people thinking you lazy you have no business to be a preacher at all." One of the changes that modern life has witnessed in regard to the ministry is that platform work has immeasurably increased. In olden days a preacher's public work was either in the pulpit or in the homes of his people. There are many ministers who sincerely regret, and even resent, the tendency of modern life to make demands upon them in the form of addresses and speeches for every kind of occasion. No doubt if such occasional addresses are not to be entirely inane and fugitive time must be given to their preparation. The audience expect and have a right to expect that the speaker will have something to say that will interest them; and the speaker if he is a wise man will not despise the day of small things, and will reflect that he can get a number of plain truths home on these less formal occasions which would not perhaps be in place in the Sunday sermon. It never seems to me to be worth while to quarrel with our changed conditions but to adapt ourselves to them so far as we are able, and make them contribute to the purpose on which our heart is set. I can hardly suppose that any part of a

serious and dignified college course can have for its object to fit a man to make speeches at tea meetings. These are not the occasions when you can display your familiarity with Eusebius, or talk learnedly about the Renaissance. Systematic theology and comparative religions are equally out of place. Yet these friendly functions, which are never complete nowadays without a speech from a neighbouring minister, ought to present an opportunity for something better than mere small talk, a cheap jest or two, and a handful of chestnuts. Your audience is in an eminently healthy and favourable state of mind. They are not wearing their stiffest theological clothes, which are as a rule bullet proof. They are friendly, affable, off their guard. They are more natural than when they have assumed the conventional Sunday mood. They are consequently more responsive. I confess it seems to me that we are in danger of assuming too superior an attitude towards such homely functions as these, and to think we can get nothing useful said, unless we have people present in the demure and subdued spirit that usually pervades a Sunday service. Now all this is, you may think, by the way. But it is suggested to me by what I see

every week of the life of the modern minister. I see that he is most successful and helpful who feels a responsibility to make every form of Church activity fulfil a high purpose. And it is to this end that he does not disdain the practice of the art of the public speaker. His business is not to contrive a few graceful and amusing nothings such as may beguile a laugh from a stodgy British audience who have to be helped to digest a dozen courses of one of our typical dinners. He must not of course be too heavy and sermonic in style, but he will consider the occasion altogether wasted if he does not get something serious said, and the solid food will doubtless go down all the better that suitable garnishing and flavouring are not out of keeping. I am trying to convey to you that your public work will necessarily mean the cultivation of two styles of address, although I am going to add the advice that the two styles should not be sharply contrasted. Again and again I have known instances of ministers who were dull to weariness in the pulpit, but as soon as they set foot on the platform were all life and vigour. You remember Mr. Birrell's criticism of the actor as a "man who in the serious business of his life is never himself." I have fre-

quently transferred that criticism to preachers I have known. They were "themselves" everywhere except in the serious business of their lives. Then they succumbed to an artificial pulpit manner and monotony of utterance which not only wearied their hearers but induced the belief that they were themselves not in earnest. In many cases this impression was to my certain knowledge utterly false. The preacher was as earnest in the pulpit as on the platform; and as keenly interested in the message of his sermon as in any social or political controversy. But he altogether failed to convey that fact in the delivery of his Sunday sermons. The same unfortunate impression is produced as that expressed in the well-known criticism of a young minister, of whom a kindly old pastor said, "Yes, he's earnest and he's orthodox; but when he's orthodox he's never earnest, and when he's earnest he's never orthodox." It is a lamentable thing if we even *appear* to be more keen and enthusiastic on the platform than in the pulpit. I think you must take it that when this does appear to be the case, the reason almost invariably lies in the delivery. There is apt to be a life, a freedom, a variety in the delivery of a speech which con-

vention insists would be undignified in the delivery of a sermon. There is perhaps something in the convention. You cannot deliver a sermon in what I should call a jaunty style. You have to communicate to your hearers in your manner something of your own sense of solemnity and responsibility. But when that is said I am persuaded we have lost far more than we have gained by the artificial pulpit manner through which it is designed to say to the congregation, "this is not a speech, this is a sermon." Remember that every canon of good speaking applies to good preaching. The minister who discovers a gift of rousing and inspiring a popular audience with a platform speech should at once ask himself how much of that style of address he can transfer to his pulpit work without doing violence to the dignity of his office. I know that I shall be required to pronounce an opinion on the vexed question of humour in the pulpit; for to many people the main difference between a speech and a sermon is that you are allowed to laugh over a speech and are expected to cry over a sermon. That is to say, by another pulpit convention which I am inclined to think is quite modern, the only emotion that must be expressed in a sermon is that

of pathos. I wonder sometimes who invented the creed that it is sacred to weep and secular to laugh. The example of many of the greatest preachers could be quoted against this particular dogma—such as Bishop Latimer, Rowland Hill and Spurgeon. Of many of the Puritan preachers it was true that a shrewd wit was the very salt of their discourses. They did not strain after the jocose, and tickle the palates of their hearers with funny or farcical sayings, but I am struck by the fact that the liberty they claimed and exercised in dealing with life was larger than is commonly enjoyed to-day. The true preacher is surely concerned with life in all its multitudinous aspects. He will not concede for instance to the dramatist greater freedom in the criticism of life than he dares to claim for himself. He cannot always be in an Aeschylean mood ; he will find it far more profitable to descend to the homelier mood of Euripides; and there will be occasions when he will not hesitate to use even the satire of an Aristophanes. I have the feeling that the pulpit will be justified to-day only by the width of its range, the breadth of its outlook; and by more daring in the weapons it handles. Of course there must be due restraint—that is as

necessary in the interests of good art as of good taste; but much will be forgiven to the man whose courage and earnestness are evident. He may deal in irony, he may laugh people out of some of their foibles, he may employ invective as well as tender appeal, the wooing note and the warning note, he may touch every string of emotion, he may argue, denounce, cajole, and do it in every tone and inflection of voice that he possesses or can acquire. There is no instrument known to the public speaker by which an audience can be moved and swayed and mastered that may not be consecrated to the sublime end of winning our hearers to the Christian faith and life.

In saying this I am anticipating somewhat the other two essentials of the perfect minister, according to John Angell James—Brains and Bowels. As for brains, I think I may claim that we have already dealt with that essential in what we have said about the sermon. But I may suggest, gentlemen, that it will not go against you if your congregation observe that you are not afraid or ashamed to use your wits in the somewhat inferior sphere of your method and manner of delivery. The resourceful minister will show himself to be one by

his skill of address. It will become evident that he has thought out the problems, not only of the composition of shot or shell, but of how to get them home on the mark. This, if I may say so, is very largely a question of the expert use of the imagination. Probably the highest service that can be rendered to the preacher by the imagination is to enable him to put himself exactly in the place of a hearer; to enter exactly into that hearer's frame of mind; to look at things exactly from that hearer's point of view. After all, the supreme secret of success in preaching is, as you will all discover, the knowledge of human life. That is only acquired by patience and sympathy and imagination. Without that knowledge you cannot possibly know what tone to take in dealing with men. The danger that I think I see in the practice of a certain style of delivery is just here: that the subjects about which we shall have to speak from the pulpit are so diverse that a manner appropriate to one is almost grotesque in dealing with another. The use of the preacher's brains, too, in regard to the matter of delivery ought to be obvious in his gestures. This is a delicate and difficult subject.

> O wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us.

Who is there with tact enough and strength enough to break us of our disconcerting tricks that drive our hearers frantic, and ruin the effect of our finest sermons? Many a hearer has gone away in distress because the one memory he could not escape has been of some grotesque pulpit habit which reduced admirable material to insignificance. Our wives might help us, if we had them, and if they had the courage. Deacons will probably suffer in secret rather than be cruel only to be kind. Is it beyond hope that we may learn to apply our own brains to the problem, and not esteem "the little rift within the lute" too trivial for our massive intellects to take cognisance of before it widens and makes our music mute? I have the feeling that, if a minister were anybody else but a minister, he would probably be cured of any habit that is a disqualification for his calling. If he were an actor he would be dealt with after a fashion that is rather strenuous than polite; and if he proved so little compliant as to be unteachable he would not be permitted to inflict himself upon an audience again. I am speaking now not necessarily upon vices of

style that we develop in our student days, but vices into which we fall later on. That is why I am pressing upon you the necessity of devoting some modicum of brain-power to self-criticism and self-inspection. Can we not, by taking thought, surprise ourselves in some of our evil ways, and for the sake of our Gospel, and the relief of our hearers, set up a rigorous system of self-discipline? If so, let us try to bear in mind that the essential thing about a gesture is that it should mean something. We are not supposed to wave our hands about because they happen to exist at the ends of our arms, like two flags, and something must be done with them. So far as preaching is concerned, many gestures are not to be desired. For such effects as we desire to produce upon our hearers we may rely on changes of tone, and even of attitude. The rare gesture that adds force to the spoken word will be the more significant that it is the less expected. You and I are not students of the histrionic and dramatic art for pulpit purposes. Ours is a plain business. We are not acting a piece; we are presenting a case. For my part I am as much against the over-elaboration of gesture as I am opposed to its neglect. Remember that

what your hearers want is that the personality of the preacher should make itself felt through voice, attitude, and gesture. Your intonations and your actions are what I should call the ornaments of your delivery. Puritans like ourselves have always cultivated rather an austere strength than the more formal and elaborate graces ; and if this is true of worship, it should, I think, also be true of our manner of preaching. I might say, also, that you will find it is most in harmony with English feeling. In Italy, I believe, oratory is mainly gesticulation, but we are not of their dramatic and highly emotional temperament, and our people prefer a style that is not so volatile as that. I would not have it supposed, even here, that I am the enemy of freedom and variety ; but I am confident that, so far as the gestures of the preacher are concerned, he will gain by restraint.

But I must pass now to John Angell James' third demand. He insists that the ideal minister must have "Bowels"; which is his answer to a very common question, whether we are to make any use of emotion in preaching. It has often been objected to lawyers who are prominent in public life that they tend to lose their hold upon the public

because they have severely schooled themselves to conquer and crush out their feelings. The result is that the common people admire their cleverness, their subtlety, their powers of logic and argument, but are not conscious of any bond of union existing between them. The man who is all "brains" and no "bowels" is an unnatural product of a special type of education and training; and it will never be said of him that the common people heard him gladly. They expect the preacher to be a man of heart; and to let them see it. God showed His heart to the world on Calvary; and we do not admire, but pity and are ashamed of, the man or woman who can view that Cross unmoved. Pathos is either a very weak or a very noble instrument of appeal. If it is in the least forced or feigned it nauseates. But if it is simple and sincere, it is the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. I shall have to warn you that the academic spirit mistrusts it; and that young men habitually grow up to disguise their deeper feelings. Why this should be so it is not easy to say. The historian, J. R. Green, finds the noblest scene in English history when Edward I. faced his subjects in Westminster Hall, and with a sudden burst of

tears owned himself frankly in the wrong. The tears of a strong man broke the heart of a proud people, and re-established a throne. As I was saying just now, we are a reserved and unemotional people for the most part, and we have, I thank God, a wholesome distaste of gush. But we are very human underneath our impassive demeanour ; and you may reckon that there is a tender heart even beneath the masque of a sphinx. One curious circumstance has made me incurably sceptical as to the immobility of the English character ; and that is the almost childish fondness for songs that are sentimental, even after a somewhat maudlin order. See how some great artiste in song will set the tears rolling down the cheeks of wealthy and blasé worldlings in the Albert Hall by the notes of "Home Sweet Home."

There is something unspoiled and elementary in all men ; and every audience I have ever faced was sensitive to the tone of sympathy and the touch of genuine friendliness and feeling. Of course, it is a platitude to say that this kind of appeal must not be overdone ; or very soon the withers of your hearers will be unwrung, and your touching passages may get to the wrong side of that queer

boundary which separates the sublime from the ridiculous. You have also to remember that these are very sacred chords that you are touching ; they must not be harshly or coarsely jangled. You may be probing wounds, and causing the sufferers exquisite agony of which you have yourself no experience. While you have only in view the revival of a tender memory, you may be actually rubbing salt into some sore. Some member of your congregation is setting his teeth to bear your tactless intrusion of his soul's sanctuary, and wishing you would have done. Most fatal of all is the deliberate attempt to "work up" people's feelings as I have again and again known unskilled evangelists set themselves to do. Their crude surgery has lacerated hearts, and re-opened wounds that the kindly hand of time had partially healed. I have actually seen poor mothers who had lost children driven into wild hysteria by men who thought they could serve the cause of Christ by a minute and harrowing description of a home bereft of an only little one, I am indicating these perils just because I am counselling you *not* to neglect the true uses of pathos. The problems you and I have to seek to solve are not susceptible of solution

by the head only. Paul was essentially a reasoner; and yet personally I would lose whole chapters on predestination and election before I would consent to part with that touching enumeration of his sufferings, or the passage in which as an old campaigner he allows young Timothy to have a sight of his wounds.

That apostolic illustration might well be compelled to serve as our text for a few moments. I set out to say that the man is greater than the sermon; and that what is most of all essential in the delivery of a sermon is that the man should speak. The phrase so commonly used to describe Mr. Gladstone was "the old man eloquent." What impressed his audience was less the eloquence of the speech than the eloquence of the *man*. His face was eloquent; his attitude was eloquent. Through all his argument and declamation, and the amazing labyrinthine sentences that seemed almost, like Melchizedek, to have neither beginning of days nor end of life, it was the personality that was eloquent. Believe me, gentlemen, grace is more than grammar. Carlyle loved to discourse on the hopelessness of Cromwell's sentences from the view of the man whose one demand of a speech

is that it should parse. To translate Cromwell into smooth and accurate English would be an excellent subject for a Young Ladies' Seminary, where the sins against grammar and style belong to the category of heinous offences. But Carlyle also loved to point out how Cromwell's great soul somehow clothed itself in these rugged phrases, so that they did become eloquent. I incline to think that a man of glowing convictions, deep and strong and passionate, is always eloquent. Paul, indeed, we believe to have been of stammering tongue; Moses pleaded with God, "I am not eloquent"; Jeremiah, in protest that moves us still, pleads, "I cannot speak!" Yet in every case the *man* triumphed where the orator was but feebly furnished with the endowment for public speech. It is no argument in favour of neglecting our mechanical preparation for our work that we insist that even mechanical perfection in elocution and address would be no guarantee of success. The first necessity is soul. I often have occasion to look upon some very beautiful and striking engravings of George Whitefield in the act of preaching. Of course I do not forget the well-understood fact that his elocution was the envy of Garrick. But I

am certain that it was not his perfection of delivery that produced the effects that followed his preaching; nor was it merely the truths he expounded, for they were preached by hundreds of others who failed lamentably to influence their age. You have only to look at these pictures, and you can still realise that the soul of Whitefield transfigured him at his work, and melted the multitude. The last secret of all good preaching is incommunicable. No college course can give it. It is personality. No more deadly error could creep into your souls than the belief that if you receive, as you pray, the inspiration of God, the consequence will be that your personality will be in abeyance. God does not supersede his own best gifts like that. "The gifts of God are without repentance." He enriches and educates and illuminates the personality that He may use it to the best purpose in the work of the kingdom.

I cannot convey to you how much I feel the moment of what I am trying to say now. It is brought home to a minister in a thousand ways, that what counts in the larger world outside his congregation is not his particular doctrines as a rule, but what one can only call his personality.

He will succeed or fail by what he is rather even than by what he says. Remember, the modern minister cannot simply exist for those people who agree with his religious ideas. More and more he must take his place in the life of his parish, his borough, his nation. He has to commend his ministry by the general spirit of his life. What is the man behind the theology and the politics? That is the question that has to be answered to the world, and I should despair of our college training if this fact were not kept in view. Dismiss, I pray you, from your minds, the thought that you can satisfy the needs of your Church, still less of your age, by a system of theology merely. That is of course, and will always be, of the greatest importance. But the word of the apostle is in my mind, "Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine." I have known instances in which academic training has rather repressed and conventionalised the "self" to which you are adjured to "take heed." That is why I am concerned to urge upon you that your greatest asset in the ministry is necessarily your personality. We can forgive a man almost anything if only he will be himself. "Take heed to thyself." Do not ape the pulpit methods or manners of any

other minister however popular. Some tricks and mannerisms are as catching as the German measles. When you are exhorted to be imitators of those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, I submit it is their faith and patience you are to imitate; and not the formal fashion of their ministry or of their piety. A double portion of Elijah's spirit, I grant you, is a worthy prayer for any young Elisha to pray; but that Elijah's mantle should droop about your shoulders with exactly the same fold as about his, is mere mimicry. Gentleman, let us beware lest in so doing we lend additional colour to Darwinian theories and seem to betray the secret of our ancestry. Originality in the sense of address and eccentricity is of course mere foolishness; but originality in the sense of being one's self, sincere, unaffected—"tis a consummation devoutly to be wished." I can quite imagine that in some of your college work you will find yourselves students of the works of thinkers of masterful mind and almost irresistible ideas. It is necessary for us at times to fight for our own life, and the freedom and independence of our own intellect. It is every man's business to be an enquirer, but it is no man's

business to be an echo. Remember that there are men who have successfully converted themselves unto phonographs. When they speak somebody else's voice is, more or less recognisably, speaking through them. Perhaps next Sunday they will put in operation a film of Henry Drummond, the Sunday after of Alexander Maclaren, the Sunday after of Frederick Robertson, the Sunday after of Horace Bushnell. I am not indifferent to the interest of these men, but I want to persuade you that your own living soul, your own thinking brain, your own active personality is more interesting than all these men put together. I sometimes think that Christ's words have been misunderstood. "Be not ye as the hypocrites are," ὑποκριτὴ *actors.* Be not ye as the actors are, who repeat sayings that are not their own, and spend their lives pretending to be what they are not, affecting feelings and sentiments which they do not possess, but which are assumed for the sake of their public. Be not ye as the actors. Take heed to thy *self.* Study how to express yourself simply and truly and forcibly and successfully; and above all see that it is your *self* that gets expression. And of course, I must add to that, see to it that you have a self that deserves expression.

Originality in the sense of genius may be denied us. But originality in the sense of having our own original and first-hand knowledge of God and His grace is, we humbly thank Him, denied to none of us. If we have nothing to tell out of our own experience of the realities of the life that is in Christ it is our own fault, there is no one to blame but ourselves. We are not obeying the Divine Will for the education of the soul. We are not taking heed to the self. We are trusting to satisfy our hearers with a few second-hand opinions. That ministry is vain. "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed." Bye and bye the awful conclusion forces itself upon the undutiful shepherd that he is but an actor—that his life is unreal—that he is attempting the impossible task of laying the burden of his own responsibility upon other men's shoulders.

> This above all, to thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

VII.

THE MODERN CHURCH.

VII.

The Modern Church.

WE have dealt with the modern sermon, and have said something, though by no means all that might be said, about the modern minister. The next step takes us to the Modern Church. And I am inclined to think that here the greatest changes of all will be manifest, if we are not only to hold our ground, but to recover much lost territory. I do not myself believe that the spirit of antagonism to the Christian gospel is at all widespread. Working people may not be specially appealed to by those dogmas which are supposed to represent evangelical Christianity. We may have been too prone, as I think we have been, to imagine that the needs of the world can be met by the repetition of certain phrases which do not, in point of fact, any longer shake human souls to their foundation, and bring them light and power and direction. But, for the most part, our preaching, to-day, is simple and straightforward.

It is not elaborately doctrinal; neither do I believe that the general reason and conscience of the people is at war with it. Of course, one may easily be mistaken; but it is a conviction with me that throughout this country there is a deep and profound reverence for Jesus Christ. Let me tell you a personal story. Some years ago now, I went down to the country town where I was brought up, and, as it was market day, I procured a cart, and conducted a service in the market square. At the close, a working man, who had been standing on the steps of a public-house throughout the service, came up to me and said, "I heard what you were saying, guv'nor. But look here. There's the Archbishop of Canterbury. He has fifteen thousand a year!" "Well," I said, "never mind the Archbishop of Canterbury." "All right," said the man, who had been drinking, "never mind the Archbishop of Canterbury! There's the Pope of Rome. He has a hundred thousand a year!" "Well," I said, "never mind the Pope of Rome. This book from which I am preaching doesn't say, What think ye of the Archbishop of Canterbury, or what think ye of the Pope of Rome? It says,

What think ye of Christ?" I never saw a greater change come over any man. He drew himself up, and he said, "Oh, if that's what you're at, I take off my hat to that Gentleman, sir!" and with a gesture of respect he unbared his head. Now there you have, I venture to think, the most ordinary attitude of working-class England; rooted suspicion of the Churches joined to profoundest reverence for the only Head of the Church. It is idle to argue how this has arisen. The causes have been many. The hypocrisies of Christian people; the immense wealth of the Church; the splendid incomes and possessions of many of its prelates; the thrones and palaces of those who are absurdly called the "princes" of the Church—their pomp and state, their pride and power, their curious antagonism to the liberties of the people and the ideals of the democracy. We, on the other hand, have missed our chance simply because we have not had the courage hitherto to attack the problems of life in a big enough and brave enough way. The men of the great trade organizations despise us. They think we are still little gardens walled around. We do not seem to see far beyond the

walls of our meeting-houses; and, consequently, we do not count as fighting forces for the renewal of the face of society. The Churches, so-called, which should be the homes of the Christian ideals, seem to these onlookers to have been supplanted by other organizations which are far more effectively working for the application of Christianity to modern life.

I do not, therefore, believe that our success in doing our work is so much a question of the re-drafting of our standards, as of the reconstruction of our organization and the revision of our methods. Here, I confess, I am astounded at our unenlightened conservatism, and at the difficulties still experienced by men of forward mind in securing the most moderate changes of policy in Churches that boast themselves of the spirit of freedom, elasticity, and progress. Free Churches, it may surely be argued, should be Churches that are free to adapt themselves to changed conditions. Parliament does not fix our rubrics or settle our articles of faith. We resent the idea that Truth can be tied to the apron-strings of the State; and we deny the authority of the Houses of Legislature over our forms of

Church government or worship. But, all the same, theoretical freedom is of no use to us. It is practical freedom we want. If we are not reaching the people we exist to serve, because our forms and methods do not appeal to them, let us resolve that we will reach our end by other means; if our activities do not fulfil their purpose, we will adopt others that will. This is the next tribute to Freedom that we of the Free Churches will be called upon to pay. We must not set up Freedom as an idol in our sanctuaries to which we give lip-homage only. It is not a statue of Liberty we want, but a spirit of Liberty. It is no answer to the earnest, consecrated minister, who is eating his heart out doing unavailing work, that whenever he wishes to lead out his congregation to aggressive work on unfamiliar lines, he should be told that such and such methods had never been resorted to before, and that So-and-So, his honoured predecessor in the ministry, never did anything of the kind. New occasions may or may not teach new creeds; but they certainly teach new duties.

Everything will depend on the ideas with which you enter upon your ministry. What

are your aims? When you attend your first deacons' meeting, will you feel like a general with his staff about him planning out a campaign—and what campaign? Are you or are you not going to set yourself to conquer your town, your village, your city district for Christ and His kingdom? Or will you consider that your work is successful if you preach acceptable sermons in a tolerably well-filled chapel? I shall make it my business to press upon you the supreme importance of the former ideal. You are to be a general; you are to carry out a campaign; and therefore you are not only to be quite sure about your cause, and that it is one for which you would gladly live and die, but you are to resolve that your cause shall be as well served as the evil causes which abound on all sides and are for the most part prosperous. In other words, you are to be a strategist, keenly observant of the tactics of the enemy, and wisely resolute to circumvent him. Whenever you find that temptations thicken about the paths of the unwary, it will be part of your business to meet these manœuvres, and contrive that the temptations to a good and sober life shall not be less

powerful than the temptations to a depraved and foolish one. During the last few years I have been pleading in the press and on the platform for scientific saints. I have nothing to say against the saints, except to protest that goodness, apart from common-sense and scientific methods, cannot win our modern battles. It is a case of trusting in God and keeping our powder dry. It is a case of trusting in God and perfecting our armaments. Ours is not the one campaign in the world that can be won without brains. Surely, our Father's business deserves at least as much consideration and intelligence as the various worldly businesses that from a purely material point of view are so admirably served. The saints have got to wake up, and think. It is science we need. The whole problem of the Church's methods wants facing again after a new and thorough investigation of the whole social situation. You remember—for it is a chapter of history very sacred to all Free Churchmen—how in the great strife between the King and the Parliament the first campaign was indecisive, and the result was a sort of stale-mate. Then the greatness of Cromwell became manifest; for

his eagle vision and lion heart grasped exactly the facts and the remedy. He set himself to organize the New Model; he brought to the thinking out of strategy a masterly and scientific intelligence. You know the result: how he first inspired his Puritan legions, and then took heed that no movement of the enemy was unobserved, and no opportunity unimproved. And, gentlemen, for our modern warfare, which is not so much with flesh and blood as with principalities and powers of evil, we need a New Model, the practical product of a new spirit. I have often read that Cromwell's army was distinguished by two qualities—its solidity and its dash. Well, we have kept the solidity, but we have lost the dash. There is nothing more solid than the average Independent Church meeting. But then there are few institutions less enterprising. As for any serious and concerted attack on strongholds of vice, such a proposal would offend their sense of propriety. We still cheer the name of Cromwell, but secretly we congratulate ourselves that he is in his grave, and not likely to pay us a very unwelcome visit.

I will come on to the question of more aggres-

sive methods of Church activity in a moment. But I must say a word on the subject of Church worship. Do you ever reflect that our order of service has probably not changed for two hundred years or more? We sometimes smile at the Church of England because her order of worship is fixed by law and cannot be altered. But even under our free system, our stereotyped service has practically imposed itself everywhere. Not only have we had the same order of service for hundreds of years, but we have the same service for districts that have almost nothing in common—for rural districts and urban districts and suburban districts; for poor and rich, for educated and half-educated—the same order of service. I am bound to say it seems to me wholly indefensible. It betrays a poverty of ingenuity. Why is our brain so unfertile of suggestion? What has happened to us that we cannot get out of our ruts? The only difference between a groove and a grave is a matter of depth. We have worn our grooves so deep, that they have well-nigh become our graves. It is a sorrowful and ominous fact, and I entreat you to ponder it. The question of our Free Church rubrics is, I believe, a delicate one with

many good and sensitive people; but we can hardly fail to recognize that it has a touch of comedy. We have held for many generations that it is permitted for all to sing, and that it is improper for one person to sing at a time; on the other hand, it is only permitted for one to pray; it is most improper for all to pray at one time. This is an entirely arbitrary and unintelligent rule. Common prayers, and solos in singing, are as admissible as prayers by the minister and congregational singing. But ordinary Free Church folk are not "easy to be entreated" on any matter affecting the traditional rubrics of the meeting-house. It is always a dangerous thing to indulge in prophecy; and if I were to tell you all that is in my mind in reference to the probable changes in the form of public worship—changes that I fully expect to see—you would be perhaps astonished. When changes begin to come, they are apt to come with a rush. We are in an uncomfortable state at the present time, for we have very imperfectly digested the modern creed which abolishes the hard-and-fast distinction between the sacred and the secular. We still hold that the doggerel nonsense of some evangelistic hymns

is more sacred than the finest poetry of some "secular" poet wedded to worthy music. We forget what magnificent contributions to Christian faith and feeling are made in the great oratorios. For the most part, we have decided to ignore these in favour of the "Glory Song," because the latter has a catchy refrain which pleases the singers and renders them oblivious of the fact that the sentiment is a glorified egotism which has little in common with New Testament Christianity. But if we believe that the distinction between secular and sacred is false, we must face the consequences and have the courage of our conclusions. At the present time, the veriest jingle ever written, if it is called a "tune," I am expected to dignify with the epithet "sacred"; while the grandest ballad music ever composed, if it is called a "song," I am expected to describe as "secular." When Madame Patti makes the proudest lip to quiver with the soft, sweet cadences of "Home, sweet Home"; or Madame Clara Butt melts her audience with the "Land o' the Leal," I must call it secular; but when the loafer on the streets extracts pence from the purses of the pious by a barbarous mutilation of a tune

that was never a melody, I am supposed to pocket my feelings and call it sacred. The distinction is arbitrary and absurd. Of course, our services are planned with a definite end in view, and that end will determine what musical compositions are and what are not suitable and helpful. But I second General Booth's protest against allowing the devil to have all the good tunes, and, I add, all the good songs. Why should songs that declare God's handiwork in nature, or in human love, or in human heroism, not find their place in a Free Church service, when the keynote of all our teaching is that all the universe is a sanctuary, and that all departments of life and service should be holy unto the Lord ?

I can hardly do more to-day than indicate principles, but I may perhaps illustrate this one by a personal experience. I found an admirable example of what I mean in the place, of all others, where perhaps I should have least expected to find it. It was in the Latin quarter of Paris, the Bohemia of that gay metropolis, and the centre of student life. One Sunday evening I wandered into a large Studio, to find it crowded with students of many nationalities. Every seat was

occupied, and scores were standing. When I arrived a hymn and chorus were being sung with evident enjoyment by the mixed throng. When this was over, a young girl student stepped on to the platform, and played one of Beethoven's glorious compositions. After that, in the simplest and most natural manner, a young American student offered prayer. There was a solo, something of Gounod's, in French; another hymn, sung by all; more music; and then the most quiet and reverent attention, while the American minister, who was responsible for this unconventional service, talked for some fifteen or twenty minutes pleadingly and powerfully with that strangely diverse audience. For myself, I was curiously affected. The utter freedom and spontaneity of the meeting, the absence of any sense of the formal and mechanical, the courageous and common-sense assumption that everything that is good and beautiful is sacred and Christian—all this was to me, beyond words, admirable; and I ceased to be surprised that so large and eager an audience of those most difficult of approach should assemble in such an atmosphere and for such a fresh and living service. Possibly that illustration

will suggest to you more than any speculation of mine can do, what changes are, I think, likely to happen, the result of which would be to transform the character of our Sunday evening services. I think it quite possible that the day may come when, in hundreds of theatres and public halls of London, we shall have thronged audiences to whom Christ and His claims will be set forth, and who will be led to God in prayer ; while in natural combination with this, the finest music will be claimed for His ministry, the noblest songs will be sung to His glory, and the greatest congregational hymns will express the thoughts and emotions of the worshippers. As I ventured to say to you that I believe the Christian faith will be saved, not by any process of impoverishment but of enlargement and enrichment, so I believe Christian worship will be saved by bolder and braver interpretation of it.

But I must pass now from Christian worship to some consideration of the methods of Church work by which the kingdom of God is to be established in our midst. Let me remind you how true it is that little ideas make little Churches. The programme of Carey made that small assembly at Kettering sub-

lime and epoch making. If we are to recover the dignity and glory of the Church of Christ, we must not be satisfied with anything short of His programme—Thy will be done on earth. The goal of Christianity is not to build churches, but to Christianise society. No city is Christian where its churches are fine and the slums are foul. We, at least, have no foolish illusions of that kind. We do not believe that a State can be Christianised by establishing a Church in it. We do not think that when Constantine carried paganism to a Christian temple and christened it Christianity, it was magically transmuted by baptism into a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. This being the case, we must necessarily be concerned to make the influence of our Churches tell on the side of social righteousness throughout the community at large. And may I say here, what I am most anxious to emphasize, that we must lay even more stress on the ministry of the Church than the ministry of preacher or pastor. Our ideal is not that there should be "one gentleman in every parish," but that all members of our Churches should be kings and priests unto God, actively engaged in the

supreme business of purifying and reforming society. If I may seize this opportunity of expressing my own hope in regard to such changes as the future has in store for us, I should like to indicate a direction in which experiments might, and ought to be made. I believe that in a city like ours, it would be an enormous advantage if two neighbouring Baptist Churches would unite, and become practically one Church with two centres of work and worship, and two ministers jointly responsible for the general campaign that has to be carried out. The advantages of such a system are enormous. One minister is not then expected to do everything that needs to be done, and it is not consequently considered essential that he should be gifted with every physical, intellectual, and spiritual endowment. The true work of the Church can be subdivided. The man with the special organising capacity can do that side of the work. The man whose gift more especially fits him for pulpit or platform can undertake that responsibility with a mind free from the thousand harassing details of committee work. I should say the ideal arrangement would be that one church building should be large and one smaller ; the large one to

be the great centre for public worship, the smaller one for the various meetings and social activities, so necessary a part of the programme of a live and vigorous community. There is no reason, of course, why such a union as I am contemplating should be confined to *two* neighbouring Churches. Several might unite on the same lines; and I repeat that the ideal system to my mind would provide for a central mother Church, with a spacious building, designed specially for a great congregation of worshippers, and, round about, a number of Christian centres, affording a local habitation and a name for the people of the district, each in charge of a minister responsible for the oversight of the work carried on there, but constantly in conference with his colleagues as to the methods to be employed. So far as I can see, there is no real scriptural warrant for the idea that a Church is to consist simply of any good Christian folk who choose to gather round a particular minister, or turn into a particular building for convenience sake alone. A Church should, if it were properly organised, represent the whole of some recognised locality. For purposes of effective service, it would find it serviceable to establish various

centres, strategical outposts. But these new centres would not mean so many independent Churches. There should be one Church for the whole locality, acting powerfully whenever big moral issues are at stake, and avoiding many of those foolish errors and blunders which are inevitable where Churches are so small and unguided. We are, of course, a very long way off any such ideal; and, so far as I know, no town has yet been daring enough to make such an experiment. But we may easily proceed a step towards it by the union of two Churches and two ministers; and such a union is almost essential if the kind of work I have in mind is to be done. The fact of the matter is, the modern minister is expected to possess all the accomplishments. He must be a good minister, he must be a skilful organiser, he must be an acceptable pastor, he must be a rousing platform speaker, he must have married an attractive wife, he must be good with young people, a musical expert, zealous in public work, tactful in matters of business; and, of course, in these modern days there should be thrown in, whenever possible, a skill in tennis and a tenor voice. Now I submit that an unlimited supply of these trans-

cendental and angelic beings is not to be looked for. I am reminded of David Livingstone's description of the qualifications for a good missionary, as he gradually became acquainted with them in Central Africa—"building, gardening, carpentering, cobbling, doctoring, tinkering, gun-mending, wagon-mending, farriering, preaching, schooling, lecturing on physics, occupying a chair in divinity, and helping his wife to make soap, candles, and clothes." In the light of this revelation, one can only say how imperfect is our college education! and how few of these accomplishments we have ever been taught! But, quite seriously, I do not regard it as inevitable that the work requiring to be done by our Churches will grow in complexity. That is why I am so anxious to provide for the possibility of a division of labour. Of course, our main hope must lie in our conception of the ministry of the Church. It should be not impossible to find volunteers for all the departments of social service we shall need. One of our difficulties hitherto has been due to our narrow and meagre programmes. When offers of service have been made to us, we have had one question to ask, "can you teach in the Sunday School?" If

the volunteer in question had neither taste nor aptitude for that kind of service, we had little else to propose. But as soon as your Church begins to address itself in real earnest to the task of meeting the social needs of the district, the opportunities for work are endless.

Let me indicate a few. I must confine myself for the moment to the problems presented by a city district, though I have no doubt that the principles laid down are of equal value and urgency in smaller towns, and even in rural districts. It has been borne in upon me very strongly that our ordinary Church members know extraordinarily little about the real world beyond their borders. For the most part they are good, simple, quiet, people, for whom the great noisy feverish world can hardly be said to exist. It has often been my lot to visit our own struggling Churches in various parts of London; and I have, for curiosity's sake, gone out of my way to ask casual people along the streets where these Churches of ours are situated. It is astonishing how few people know or care where their buildings are. Of course, they ought to be obliged to know, and to take account of our Churches as the

strongest forces making for righteousness in the locality. Every publican ought to know us ; every bookmaker, every proprietor of a gaming hell, every landlord of a bad house, every slum owner, every sweater ought to know that the real enemy to be feared is the Church that has its habitation in such and such a street. But, so far as I can see, the average man who is guilty of these nefarious practices is rather pleased than otherwise when a new Church is founded in his district, because he thinks that the Christian people will now meet there and amuse themselves in various ways, expending most of their energy in listening to sermons and in gossiping over a cup of tea, and they will have little left to bestow on him and his affairs, so that he is not likely to be disturbed. Now, I should say, one of the first actions of a Church, after its formation, ought to be to appoint a Civic Committee, which should meet regularly, report to the Church, and take vigorous action in the case of all irregularities and immoralities of which it has proof. It ought to be prepared to keep a vigilant eye on the licensing sessions, to watch every proposal for extension of licences, and to object to their renewal whenever there is sound

reason for doing so. It ought to act also in combination with a Visiting Committee, whose business should be to visit the neighbourhood systematically on the parochial principle. The members of the latter organisation should report on cases of overcrowding, and rack-renting, and insanitary buildings, and so forth. Then the Civic Committee would make serious representations in the proper quarter. Action should also be taken in regard to the election of Borough Councillors, Guardians, and so forth. It is most desirable that whenever possible these elections should be prevented from becoming mere party conflicts. Questions should be prepared, which should be submitted to all candidates, with a view to securing explicit pledges in regard to those moral and social reforms with which the Church of Christ must ceaselessly concern itself. Modern life, let us remember, is the opportunity of the knave as well as of the honest man. It presents endless opportunities of jobbery, and open or secret scoundrelism. The shops where filthy pictures and literature are to be bought; the flats that are designed for vicious purposes; the vile traffic in flesh and blood; the traps of the gamesters for women and young children—these

must all be watched, and only a living and valiant policy can antagonise them with any success. Some people I know say, 'but all this is surely the work of the authorities: why should we not leave it to them and devote ourselves to theology?' Well, that question brings me to another point. It is our business to act in close and sympathetic co-operation with the authorities, who can act where we are helpless. Take, for instance, the police. I believe the police generally over the whole country are a fine reliable set of men. But they know little about the Churches, and the Churches know little about them. You see it is their business to know the sinners. But as we don't trouble them, unless we are passive resisters, they are not interested in us. The police and the sinners know one another by nature; the police and the saints only by grace. Yet do you ever think of the temptations of these men? From time to time we hear of their being corrupted. Is it any wonder? The publican and the harlot have reason to propitiate them and purchase their inactivity. Their pay is not large, and they find secret sources of emolument open to them. They want to do their duty; but nobody seems anxious

to stand by them and encourage them to its manly and fearless execution. Now I maintain that it is the duty of the Churches to enter into sympathetic relations with these men and encourage them, and get them on to the side of reform and purity in the life of the locality. I have never forgotten the first night I spent in the neighbourhood of the Tottenham Court Road, exploring the district with the chief of our local police. We saw many things, of which I cannot stop to tell you, many evils which only time and patience and strenuous effort can uproot. But I saw, for the first time, the uses to which the midnight coffee-stalls were put, which had been denounced so often by John Burns as a curse to London. I saw that they existed to enable the vicious classes to spend their night on the streets. One of these coffee-stalls was open on the pavement in front of my Church, and I asked my friend and guide why this was allowed. "Oh," he replied, "no objection has ever been made. Probably nobody connected with your Church knows of its existence. You see all the good people are asleep." It was true in more senses than one. But the result of that night's voyage of discovery was that we took vigorous

action, and in a short time all the coffee-stalls were removed from the Tottenham Court Road. Since that time we have been in the closest co-operation with the police authorities. They constantly send on to us people who have got into trouble innocently; young girls whom they have rescued from doubtful surroundings; and even young lads, who have been released as first offenders, with a warning and an exhortation to a better life. There is simply no end to the good work that a Church can do if only it is in friendly touch with the authorities—that ideal voluntary union of Church and State, which is theoretically the aim of the Free Churches, but which practically is so seldom realised.

I have spoken so far rather of the negative than of the positive work of our Churches; rather of the policy "thou shalt not" than of "thou shalt." But of course our campaign would not be a very inspiring one if we simply took care that trespassers should be prosecuted. Indeed, we are all ceasing to believe in purely negative campaigns, and to insist that a place must be found for a generous positive Christian programme. The Christian programme to which I

refer is that represented by the single word "counter-attraction," and by the well-worn motto "Prevention is better than cure"; in other words, the one remedy for those whose tendency it is to drift into mischief is something healthy and sensible and useful to do. To forbid or discourage legitimate and wholesome recreations and amusements is to produce a void; and, as Mr. John Morley says in "Compromise," "into this void will enter in triumph the seven devils of secularity." That, as you will agree, is to create a problem, not to solve one. Now I hope it is unnecessary that I should say that the nature of the programme of the Church should depend absolutely on the district it has to serve. No Church can be well advised to become the competitor with home life, and withdraw from the home circle those who ought to brighten and enrich it. On the other hand, there are few districts of large cities where there are not hundreds of people living, who have no home life and cannot have any. They live in lodgings, or, in the poorest districts, they make shift to live as families in one or two rooms. There is no comfort, and almost no privacy. For any escape from the dingy and dirty and un-

inspiring surroundings, there is, as a rule, only one open door—the door to the public-house. The other escape is the music-hall, but that means more money than need be spent across the counter. The bar parlour of the ordinary saloon or public-house is a bright, cheerful, sociable resort; and from the dark houses and dingy streets, can you wonder that the people of the starved lives flock there? Indeed, I sometimes wonder whether you have any right to take that one little chance of comfort from them, until you supply them with something better. When I plunged into my present work, I felt that there was one aspect of evil I had never sufficiently realized—the brilliance of evil, the attractiveness of evil, the splendour of evil.

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind,
> Or where the gorgeous East with lavish hand
> Showers on her sons barbaric pearl and gold,
> Satan exalted sat.

Why is it that the homes and haunts of evil are so beautiful to the outward eye, and those homes of Christian influence and activity are often so dull and dingy and repellent? I go into a mission-room and see the stiff, high-backed

forms, the frowsy hangings, the general air of neglect and discomfort, and I say to myself, "And this is the Church's idea of counteracting the baleful influence of those brilliant saloons out there!" It isn't business. We have got to prove that unselfishness can devise homes for the people as bright and attractive as anything that selfishness can devise. We must do it, or admit that we have failed. You who listen to me are going out into the ministry at a critical time. There is, I am thankful to know, great unrest and inward dissatisfaction among our Churches. We are realizing that we have lived too much unto self. We have spent our money to make our own people comfortable. The spirit of Christ is at work mightily in the Free Churches to-day. I see before us an era of extraordinary expansion, during which we shall reconsider our methods, adjust our machinery to changed conditions of life, and make practical confession that we belong to the people and exist to help and serve them. Then we shall get them. We shall have to take trouble about them, and sub-divide our work in wise fashion. We shall have to interest ourselves in their lives, in the questions of work and wages, which are such

urgent problems to these brothers and sisters of ours. Nothing human can be indifferent to us. If they have reason to know that we care for them, that it is not only our duty but our privilege to add to their few simple pleasures, to fight their battles against bad landlordism, as well as to give to their souls for eternal possessions the animating hopes and convictions of the Christian evangel to live and die by, they will not only be our friends, they will be the staunchest, most generous, and most devoted of friends. When I think of the kindnesses I have received from working people, I am overwhelmed. The one certain thing in England is the soundness and tenderness of the heart of the democracy. It is my hope and prayer for all of you that your experience may be as happy as mine has been. It will not necessarily be our fine sermons that will win us our influence; it will rather be our larger ministry, and the ministry of our Churches, that will win their confidence, respect, and enthusiasm, and enable the disciple to be as his Lord, of Whom the words were written, "the common people heard Him gladly."

VIII.

THE MODERN PASTORATE.

VIII.

The Modern Pastorate.

I CAN well imagine that, as I have sketched my own ideal of the wider Free Church mission which it seems to me the 20th century has brought within our range, some of you will have asked yourselves the question, What about the pastorate? If we are to regard all these people as having even a possible relation to us, and ourselves as having an actual responsibility to them, how can we hope to discharge the pastoral duty? The Church of England, with her wealthy endowments and her right of appeal to the richest classes in the nation, has been able to provide for a system of visitation by curates. It is true that the parochial system has broken down in the great cities, but something approximating to complete provision for house-to-house visitation has been established in many parts. Now it is not easy to see how we, with our limited means,

are to do our pastoral duty on these lines to a whole district. So long as our conception of the Church's mission was that a flock was to be gathered out of the world, and shepherded with all care, and the rest of humanity left to shift for itself, the pastoral office was a possible one. But now that we are definitely outgrowing that conception, the time has come when pastoral methods will have to be reconsidered as well as preaching methods and methods of Church work. For I shall not hesitate to press upon you that the personal and spiritual tie is indispensable and invaluable. There is something daring and sublime in that old phrase, "the cure of souls." Our ministry is a ministry to diseased and deformed spirits. We believe we have a gospel for the morally weak and the spiritually infirm. We believe that we have secrets of consolation for those who are pierced with many sorrows. We believe that at the vision of our Christ the thongs do break that bind the burdens to men's souls. But men and women need to be told this quietly, solemnly, face to face. Of course I do not forget that social life to-day is far less simple than it used to be, and the direct contact with our fellows

is less easy. This is no mere case of change in our social habits. Thousands of people do not live where they work, and can only be seen in the evening, when a minister's hands are full in so many directions. That is a real obstacle to pastoral work. But in addition to that, we must recognize that modern life does not tend to make people more accessible. There are many noble products of our age, but I should not say simplicity is one of them. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," and we are passing through the stage of the "little knowledge." The tendency is to be smart, shallow, artificial, superficial; and the saying of Jesus certainly does not grow easier with the years—"Except ye become as little children, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." I do not say this in the least to discourage you; only it is well for us all to look facts in the face. Pastoral work that means simply a friendly call, an enquiry or two about the children, a cup of tea, and some harmless Church gossip, is one thing; but pastoral work that means the care of souls, some recipes out of the pharmacopœia of your spiritual experiences prescribed for those who are "ailing here and there," that is a difficult

and anxious work, even though it has great recompense of reward.

I sometimes think that if we knew in our college days what pastoral work really is, we should perhaps go out into the ministry less unprepared on that all-important side. I wonder whether by an illustration or two I can convey to you some of my own early sensations as I was driven to realize what the ministry means. Some of you remember the touching story which Dr. Dale somewhere tells of a visit he paid as a young minister to one on whom a sudden bereavement had fallen ; and how he sat with her, unable to speak, feeling that all words were cold ; and how at last, awkwardly, he got up and went out, depressed to the verge of despair, only to hear afterwards that his speechless sympathy had given the very comfort he upbraided himself for not being able to communicate. When I read that story, I remember how the news reached me very soon after my settlement in my first pastorate that one whom I had learned greatly to admire, even in a short time, had been suddenly stricken down to death, and I was expected to go and comfort his widow. I can see myself now walking up

and down opposite the house with the drawn blinds, trying to muster up courage to ring the bell and face the scene of grief within. Then I realize once more the horror of the darkened room, and the sorrowful sufferer distraught with misery; and I, a young, raw, inexperienced minister, who had never understood till then that the ministry was like this, and meant lacerated feelings and the bearing of other people's burdens. Not very long afterwards another experience befell me which, still, after the lapse of many years, remains singularly vivid. This time it was the tragedy of a young girl's life. She was betrothed to a young fellow of bright promise, and on her twenty-first birthday there was a party up the river on a steamboat. Eager to get her a cushion, he somehow tripped and fell, and was drowned there before her eyes. Think of it! Then put yourself in my place as I tried to face the almost impossible duty of consolation. I can see her now, looking as if she were turned to stone—a white, cold, marble face—and yet holding out to me hands of entreaty that I would say something to give her back her faith, and, truth to tell, I was bankrupt of my own. How little I had even

conceived that the Christian ministry was after this fashion!

Just one other scene, also sketched from my own early ministry. This time we are concerned with one who was from the first the warmest and kindliest champion of mine, a Sunday-school superintendent, so beloved by all that it might truly be said of him, as of William of Orange, that when he died, the little children cried in the streets. And mysteriously he was stricken with mental malady; a dark melancholia oppressed him, and in a moment of madness he took his own life. How shall I ever forget the day of his funeral—the crowds of mourners, the ranks of weeping children, aye, and the curious morbid spectators, too. I was only five-and-twenty, and my experience was painfully slight. Something had to be said to count, if possible, on the side of faith at that hour when the All-Father's face seemed darkened. And, once again, I reflected that if I had known the ministry meant this, I might never have had the courage to face it. You have to remember that the minister is expected to be an interpreter of dark providences; that it is at such times as I have described that he finds men and

women depending upon him, hanging on his words with an embarrassing wistfulness that trembles between hope and despair. This belongs to his pastoral privilege and responsibility; and I cannot disguise from you that here lies the supreme trial, the supreme opportunity of the ministry. These are the tasks that tax your soul and that make you preach. The true minister and good preacher is always "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It must be written of him, in some small measure, "surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." It is at such times that you pay the penalty of a sensitive spirit, and understand that the most valuable and exacting work of the ministry is done less even with the brain than with the heart. I have not even yet done justice to this side of my subject, nor indicated to you the deepest waters through which a minister is sometimes called upon to pass. Paul's sharpest agonies, we are sure, were not for the sufferings and bereavements that came upon his converts. For such he had radiant encouragements and consolations. Their "light afflictions" were working for them crowns of glory. But the sins of the Church at

Corinth, and its consequent eclipse of faith—"How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"—the grievous lapses from virtue and faith—these made him feel in middle life "such an one as Paul the aged"; for these are the bitternesses that wring the cry from the soul, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It may come to pass that some member of your Church commits a public sin, and the shadow of merited disgrace falls not only across his innocent family at home, but even across the Church of God. You can almost hear the mockery of the street, and catch the cynical smile upon the faces of those "that watch for our halting." Here lies a minister's Gethsemane, and it is difficult not to rebel even fiercely at times against that which is written in our book of destiny. Sometimes, of course, the tragedy we have to face arises not from sin, but from the "eclipse of faith." We have perhaps been uneasily conscious for a considerable period of a sense of coldness and apathy on the part of one of our younger members. Phrases are used which signify more than mere indifference; duties in the Church are resigned with a decision there is

no mistaking; attendance at public worship becomes less regular, and a lack of interest and conviction is only too manifest. Perhaps the person whose soul is in peril through the death of hope and enthusiasm is one of your own members, and you recall the early glow of faith and consecration, and contrast that warmth of loyalty with this chill of doubt. Then follow the conversation, the frank confession not only that the child of your spiritual family has lost his first love, but that reverence has changed almost to sour contempt. Possibly no one else in the congregation cares very deeply. A name is struck off a roll; other names are added, and the numerical gain of the Church is referred to in public as matter for legitimate congratulation. But the minister feels as if he could forget the ninety and nine, if only he could seek and find the one that is lost to faith and God and humanity. He carries this cross alone; his heart knoweth its own bitterness; and in the quiet of his study he has to seek "the sure relief of prayer," and realize that the appointed path of the ministry is often shadowed with the "sorrow" that is "like unto My sorrow."

There is also a form of trial to the earnest minister, from which he suffers acutely, although it does not follow that there is any reason for self-commiseration; I mean those instances in which members of his congregation, to use a common phrase, "go over to the Church." In my own actual ministry I have known very few instances of this metempsychosis. I must have received dozens from the Church of England to every one who has "verted" to that particular fold. It is almost inevitable that a minister should view such secession in the light of a personal slight upon himself and dissatisfaction with his ministry; but that is to take a wholly selfish and unworthy view. We may feel so sure of our case that we reproach ourselves with not having put it sufficiently earnestly and lucidly to those who are leaving us. But it behoves us to remember that, in the nature of things, it is not to be expected that all Christian people can think alike, or will be attracted by precisely the same ideals. There is such a thing as the artistic, the æsthetic, or the musical temperament, and this is likely to find a more congenial form of worship in the Anglican communion. The only question

we have any right to ask is, whether the change of denomination is the result of a genuine aspiration after a more devout and whole-hearted Christian life. If it is clear that the change is due to that low class of reasons which we call social, and not to that high class of reasons which we call spiritual, we ought to feel as Paul felt in the case of his Galatian converts, that they had set the sense above the soul, and that their recreancy was in essence a surrender to the flesh. But do not let us be narrow-minded, and do not let us assume that people may not legitimately leave our Churches for higher reasons. I could tell you of ministers who have left us, and who I am persuaded have found their true sphere in the Episcopal Church, and will do better work there than they could ever have done where they were. It is not necessary that we should relax our own convictions as to the fundamental soundness of the Free Church and unsacerdotal position, to realize that God fulfils Himself in many ways, and that to all who leave us with the full desire of living the Christian life in connection with any Christian denomination we ought to be able to say from the heart "God speed you."

I now turn to the other side of the shield. It was made a reproach against the Son of Man that He came "eating and drinking," rejoicing in all the joys of men, and mingling in their feasts even more than observing their fasts. It is a great thing that men and women should see in you the one to whom they can most readily turn when they are in trouble; but it is at least equally necessary that they should regard you as a friend to whom all their hopes and joys and healthy activities are of interest. Let us remember that, after all, the greater part of life is not sickness, but health, and that health means high animal spirits,—

> Jest and youthful jollity,
> Sport which wrinkled care derides,
> And laughter holding both her sides.

It is no business of ours to frown down on what is wholesome and natural; it is our duty rather to sympathize freely with this many-sided life; with the young workman keen to excel, with the legitimate ambition of the business man, with all the family joys of rich and poor. We may not be much of a hand at playing games ourselves, but we must never be a death's-head at the feast.

Part of our victory is won when our presence adds zest to every game, and enhances all the fun that is going, as well as elevating the character of all social functions and eliminating any strain of coarseness and vulgarity from the comic songs and mirthful amusements. We have got to set out upon our ministry with the fixed conviction that laughter is a most Christian influence in life. Once, in the lobby of the House of Commons, Mr. John Burns, speaking of the working men who come to my meeting on Sunday afternoons, said to me, "Keep them sunny." It is an excellent practical counsel. Think of all there is in the lives of men and women to depress them and darken their spirits. Think of their endless worries and anxieties. Think of their ceaseless struggle to make both ends meet. Think of the dreary rooms in which thousands of them live, and how large a proportion have given up any hope of doing anything more in this world than just barely holding back the wolf by the ears until Death ends the fight. Then think how a little life and laughter mean the temporary oblivion of care, the relaxation of the tension of the mind, the smoothing out of the haggard lines

on the face. The memory of bright hours is often the solace of dark ones. You help people more than you know to fight their battles when you keep them sunny and cheerful.

So far, however, I have dealt mainly with the general principle. No minister can afford to lay aside the simple pastoral staff even for the sceptre of the preacher, much less for the red tape and sealing-wax of the organiser. And, that being agreed upon, it will behove us now to consider how we can make provision for this side of our work in the new order of ministry that seems to be coming upon us in these busy days. Remember that in our big towns and cities there is a tendency for our Churches to become larger. Men and women, especially in poor districts, like to lose themselves in a crowd; but the bigger the congregation, the less possible becomes personal visitation of each member by the minister. And if in addition to the visitation of the congregation you are going to add the systematic visitation of a parochial district, it is quite clear that such a work can only be done by a well-organized system of visitors carefully chosen for the purpose. On more than one occasion the Free Churches

have had spasms of good resolutions glancing in this direction. They have agreed upon Free Church parishes, and they have actually marked them out in red ink on a map. I have seen such maps very dusty and forlorn hanging in dark corridors or adorning the walls of vestries. If a united mission is held, something in the nature of bill distribution takes place, but there the business ends. So far as the systematic visitation of the people is concerned, it is little better than a farce. Yet the scheme in itself is good, and I am persuaded we shall have to revive it, if we are to win England. Not a few Churches known to me are working schemes for the visitation of Church members and seat-holders. Sometimes the plan is followed of assigning a district to each deacon or elder, and in other places a board of deaconesses is constituted for this purpose. All such arrangements are good, and it may fairly be pleaded that the first duty of a Church is to its own members and friends. But I still insist that, if we are to assume that responsibility for our "parish," on which I have throughout insisted, then we must extend our system of visitation to cover those homes whose occupants "go nowhere," and who

can only be reached by friendly intervention of this kind. Probably some of those who are here are familiar with what is known as the Elberfeld system. This is not, of course, a Church system, though the co-operation of all Churches is sought; but it has for its object that no individual or family shall be friendless; that no genuine case of need shall go unhelped; and that the gulf that too often separates class from class shall be bridged. Of course, the Elberfeld system is purely social in its aims. It ought to be possible for us to be just as thorough in our endeavours to solve social problems, and yet to combine with these efforts the further aim of quickening the higher manhood and womanhood of those we are seeking to influence. I am persuaded that, difficult as it is to supply the need, what the men and women want, who live in these homes, is supremely a pastor—one to whom they can open their hearts, and who will have wise and kindly counsels to give. For the healing of human hearts it is not money that is needed, but sympathy and some assurance of a Divine Saviourhood. Thousands of our hard-pressed brethren in the battle of life would have an entirely new attitude to the Church of Christ,

if they were assured by a representative of one of our Churches that there was an earnest desire to be their friend and helper.

"But," says someone, with not unnatural anxiety, "would not the result of this be to create a false impression of the Church as the almoner of the community? And would not this supposition as to her eleemosynary character prejudice her claim to be a moral and spiritual guide?" There is some force in this contention, but I may point out to you that gradually a little order is being evolved out of the chaos and confusion into which social service and the administration of relief had fallen. We are getting rid, every day, of the idea that the Churches exist simply to dole out sixpences to unfortunate or thriftless persons. Granted a visitor, who is a real man or woman, and the day soon arrives when his or her visit is prized for its own sake, and not valued simply for the possibility it may present of getting soup and blankets. The breaking down of false and foolish notions is not something that can be done all at once; but if only the law against the giving of relief on the spot is made absolute, the proper relationship between

visited and visitor is soon established. The one fixed principle in every visitor's mind ought to be that the real mission of the Church is not to administer charity, but to establish justice. "To do justice," even in the ancient law, precedes the command "to love mercy." We are concerned to create fair and just conditions of life; to lessen the appalling ills of overcrowding and sweating, and the temptations to drink, gambling, and immorality. Simple justice to humanity demands that we should interest ourselves in such problems as these in the towns, as well as in the securing for the country labourer of some prospect of hope in his ill-paid and monotonous existence. You will agree with me that the first condition of doing justice is an accurate knowledge of life as it is lived. The Church will never make herself the mouthpiece of justice and humanity until she knows all the facts. She may still be a Lady Bountiful; she may alleviate pain, but she cannot heal the wounds; she may be a nurse, but not a physician. But if she is not to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it must be evident to us all that the Founder of the Church misled us as to the true quest she was to pursue. For

my part, I believe that such charity as needs to be organized in relief of existing miseries will be more and more taken in hand by the State authorities, and ought to be so taken in hand. Municipal lodging-houses for the destitute, municipal soup kitchens, municipal relief works, are developments of modern civilization with which we are already familiar, and I do not want the Church to undertake responsibilities which the State must assume. No doubt the whole of our extravagant and often inhuman poor-law system will be in the melting-pot before many years are out. But I am increasingly doubtful whether it is any business of ours as Churches to organize labour homes, labour yards, and doss-houses, and all the rest of it. I am for doing the things which the State cannot do, and for co-operating with the State in all efforts to make our poor-law system wiser and more humane. Primarily, I repeat, we exist to preach justice and to work for justice. It is not for nothing that the glorious title of our Lord is Jesus Christ the Righteous—Jesus Christ the Just. It is not for nothing that even Pilate's wife thought of our Saviour as that *just* Man! We have spoken too much of Him as Jesus the Merci-

ful, and too little as Jesus the Just; even as all our conceptions of Him and of His ministry and of His mission have erred on the side of the effeminate rather than the masculine in Him. Never can I forget one of my last talks with Dr. Dale, when he spoke about the spiritual trials of his own illness, and how in his great need he had sought to lay hold anew of the conception of Christ as the tender, merciful, and compassionate Helper and Healer of men. But no strength seemed to come that way. "It was not," he said, "until I realized the austere aspect of His person and mission that the peace came." The Church must come to that realization if it is to be a herald of peace to a stricken world. The world knows now that its woes cannot be healed by charity, only by justice. We have been too prone to believe that you could assuage the volcanic furies of Vesuvius by sprinkling it with rose-water.

All this that I am saying is far more directly concerned than it seems to be with the pastoral work of the Church. For I am assuming that it is possible to make our Churches so many centres to which this burdened and troubled humanity

of ours with all its needs will turn to find light and heart and happiness. I am assuming that we shall be in such close touch with all branches of State machinery for helping men and women to turn a corner and get on to their feet again, that we shall be able to give them direction as to the best course to pursue in these respects. But it will be evident to you that far more than this must and will arise out of this branch of work. That we shall come across many pathetic cases of pure misfortune, or of those weak ones physically and mentally, who in the stress of life have gone to the wall, goes without saying. But it also goes without saying that by far the larger proportion of those who come to you for help are in difficulties from their own fault. We do not set up confessionals in our Churches, and propose penances, and inflict fines ; but, none the less, we listen to confessions which are all the more impressive that they are not artificial nor a mere matter of form. Men and women come to us with their sins, not because they are expected or invited or commanded to come, but because they cannot keep silence. The minister who has succeeded in making his Church a tower of refuge,

a lighthouse in a dark district, has an extraordinary kaleidoscopic vision of life. Nowhere are all the tragedies and comedies of a great city presented in such instructive and fascinating fashion. What tangled skeins we seek with patience and with clumsy fingers to unravel! What insight is vouchsafed us into this strange human nature, this mystic compound of good and evil! If I were to break the seal of the confessional, and repeat to you some of the stories of sin and shame that have been poured into my ears, and with which henceforth I have to live, you would say that all you ever heard of melodrama was not more astounding. What struggles, fruitful and fruitless, we have had for the souls of men and women! Through what mazes of duplicity we have sometimes sought to follow them! What baffling studies of character many of them present! What virtues are found to consist with what vices! And it is of course our duty not to be estranged in spirit even from those who have the darkest confessions to make, and who have fouled themselves in every filthy cesspool of city lust and crime. We are bound by our gospel to believe that we are the servants of a God who can perform the

miracle of creating in men like this a clean heart; and by every profession we have ever made we are bound to attempt the humanly impossible in faith. And the fact of the matter is, that if the failures often depress and trouble us, the successes also bewilder and confound us. There is no explanation, except the power of supernatural Love; and the more we believe that, the more the belief is justified by its works.

Probably you will anticipate a certain warning that I cannot leave unspoken. It is an old saying, that none can touch pitch without being defiled. Such pastoral work as I have suggested has got to be faced; but we must not forget what discipline of our own thoughts and imaginations will be necessary if our hearts and minds are to remain pure. It is not easy to receive in confidence all sorts of confessions of deeds unclean, and remain unsmirched and untainted in soul. It is not even easy to see into the world's sinister secrets and remain untouched by the spirit of pessimism or cynicism. It is not easy to discover that you have been a victim of fraud and lies, and then turn with just the old faith in humanity to the next comer who has the story of a broken life to tell

you. But this is where your victory lies. The pastoral spirit is just the spirit of the Good Shepherd, who daily lays down life for what the old preacher called "God's sillie sheep." And if it lies in your path of duty to follow them where you must suffer some lacerations of your own spirit and gather some dark stains of the enterprise, it will be for you to realize that Christ's healing and cleansing are for shepherd as well as sheep; and that in fellowship with Him you must renew the purity of your spirit, and that His presence alone can transfigure "the chambers of imagery."

The last practical point to which I will refer in this lecture concerns a development of pastoral work which is comparatively new in the Free Churches, and which will undoubtedly become increasingly important and valuable as the years go by. The employment of the paid sick nurse or Bible-woman has, of course, for many years been a recognized feature in the activities of well-to-do Churches; and it would not be easy to exaggerate the good which such self-denying workers have been able to accomplish. But it has only been in recent times that we have

grasped the idea of a natural extension of this form of work. In connection with our missionary societies, we have always had the benefit of some honorary missionaries—ladies able to support themselves, and glad to give themselves to a career which promises such exceptional usefulness and happiness. It surely might have occurred to us earlier that a similar self-dedication to the life for others is as necessary at home as abroad. We owe much to Women's Settlements for the initiation and expansion of this order of service; and if it can be proved to me that it is correspondent in Free Church life and on Free Church lines to the Sisterhood of the Poor that, with their rigid vows and their repellent costumes, and their oftentimes cruel discipline, have wearied France and Italy of them, I shall not be discouraged. Our Sisters of the Poor are subject to no vows; their property is their own; they are free to come or go; there are no severe rules of their order; and they can be, and ought to be, dressed in the brightest and most attractive of uniforms, as becomes those whose errands to their fellow-creatures are intended to radiate happiness and hope. We are just beginning to

realize that there are scores and even hundreds of Christian ladies with a modest livelihood, who would welcome the opportunity of a career of service and even of sacrifice. This that I speak of is no question of devoting a few hours in an evening to some branch of Christian work. We are, of course, not ungrateful nor unmindful of the multitude who can do that and no more than that. I am speaking of those who consecrate themselves and their whole lives to the service of their fellows. I hope to live to see the day when there will be, as a matter of course, a home for such as these in connection with every large Free Church in a crowded area. They will be recognized as belonging to the staff of the Church or mission centre; and they will help to represent the pastoral spirit of the Church to all the dreary homes they visit, the sad lives they brighten, and the dark souls they save. I spoke a little while ago of the Church's confessional. But you and I do not believe that there is any scriptural warrant for the idea that confession must be made to a priest, or even to a minister. The best possible confidant for most young girls is some motherly soul, who will deal wisely and kindly with them;

or some sisterly soul, who will enter into their trials and temptations, and win them to higher and better things. None of us can do the work that can be done, and is done so cleverly and admirably by those who have been tempted by the attractions of "the dedicated life" to join us in the ministry of Christ. For my part, great as is my admiration for the life-work of many of the Salvation Army lasses, I have come to believe even more in the courage and commonsense and far-reaching influence of those who have known the blessings of an educated home, and whose lives are inspired by the highest ideals, and who have brought forth the wealth of their culture and training and laid it at the feet of Christ, for the service of His poor. Some of them will qualify for one special branch of ministry by taking a hospital course, and will then devote themselves to nursing the sick folk. Others will turn their special attention to children, will study kindergarten methods, so as to manage a play centre for the little ones; or will practise the arts and crafts of woodcarving and metal work, so as to interest and instruct unruly lads or girls. Some will make themselves proficient in physical exercises, so as to train the

overworked factory girls in the laws of health. All will become in time skilled and trusted in investigations as to the best methods of helping those who are out of work, or down on their luck. You can see, without any elaboration of the point on my part, how invaluable and indispensable is such an addition to what I should call the pastoral activity of the modern Church.

Gentlemen, I am more and more persuaded that if we are to recover our beloved land for Christian faith and righteousness, we shall have to rely on such quiet, assiduous, patient, and courageous ministries as these. By means of them we not only build up our clubs for girls, our guilds for children, our societies for women ; we not only encourage thrift and discourage drinking habits, but we help to train mothers and build homes, and so strengthen the very fabric of our society. It is not preaching *at* people that wins, but sympathising with them, and making friends with them, and giving them a chance of making friends with you. I often find myself marvelling when I compare the New Testament with the Modern Church. Our Lord did so little of His work in the pulpit. Most of His eternal truths

were spoken to passers-by in the streets, to a chance woman of Samaria, to a doubtful tax-collector like Zaccheus, to a rich hypocrite like Simon, or else in the bosom of the little family circle of disciples. I am not suggesting that we, in the twentieth century, can reproduce the methods of the first. But I wonder whether those earliest methods did not enshrine principles for the guidance of Christians, and whether we have not lost sight of some of them. Of this I am certain: we must cease to regard our congregations as so many seat-holders, who pay so much a Sunday for the privilege of listening to a certain preacher. We must realise that the Church exists in this world to be the representative of its Lord, who said, "Come unto Me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." The music of the Church must be a pastoral symphony. Its ministry is still the laying down of life for the sheep. Its mission is the shepherding of souls.

IX.

THE MODERN CATHOLIC.

IX.

The Modern Catholic.

IT is time that we should turn from the subject of our relation to our own Church and congregation, and even our own parish, to the wider subject of our relation to other Churches, and what responsibilities we may have to assume and discharge to the general body of Christian people, and to those representative institutions which express our Christian faith and love. I have been in the habit of reminding those who have joined the local Christian Society, of which I have been the minister, that they are uniting themselves by that act to the whole Catholic Church of Christ,—His avowed disciples, by whatever denominational title they may be described. I have also thought it well to remind them that they belong to historic Christendom; that the narrow and foolish theories which would unchurch them and deprive them of their heritage, must be treated as of no importance;

and that all that has ever been transmitted of Christian truth or achieved of Christian heroism belongs to them as much as to any member of any other branch of the Catholic Church. It is particularly necessary that we should take this ground boldly. We are, and we ought to be, denominationalists. We have a history to be proud of. By severing ourselves definitely from the historic Church, we are able, of course, to disclaim and repudiate more emphatically the dark and guilty annals of the ages of persecution. But, by so doing, we may easily make the mistake of ignoring the glorous fact that God has never left Himself without a witness; that children of light and liberty have been born of the gospel in all the Christian centuries, and that we can trace our special lineage through them to the apostolic times. I believe it does our Churches good to be constantly recalled to the truth that our inheritance is not fully described in the book of the chronicles of our denominational history, nor our obligations limited to the Churches of our own special faith and order. I need not remind you how strikingly this has been emphasised among Free Churchmen of recent years. That we have a long way to

travel yet before our unity is as satisfactory and durable as it should be, we are all aware. But, whereas in former days, the strongest forces that affected us were sectional and divisive; to-day they are making for cohesion and coalition. A movement is in progress amongst us, akin to that more majestic one which is in progress among the nations. The first step, I take it, to international brotherhood must be what I should call a spiritual union of the Free Democracies. The great despotisms, such as Russia and Germany, will be drawn in later, as they are gradually penetrated and dominated by the spirit of freedom. But a sound understanding among the Free Democracies is undoubtedly the first step toward the reduction of armaments, and the establishment of permanent conditions of peace. In the same way, I am persuaded that the first real step toward interdenominational peace and brotherhood, and possibly the eventual reunion of Christendom, must be a sound practical understanding between the various Free Democracies that bear the Christian name. We must reduce our armaments—that is to say our polemical literature; not the literature that does justice to our positive national characteristics, but

the literature that does injustice to the characteristics of other free Christian states. We must avoid aggressive and provocative action, such as overlapping, and irritating forms of competition. We must school ourselves to refuse the language of suspicion, and habitually employ that of justice and magnanimity. I think we may congratulate ourselves that, in the matter of international peace among our free democracies, we have practically no "yellow press" peril. Our denominational newspapers nowadays do not often sneer at other denominations than their own. We defend each other often; we attack each other seldom. It may be that the big "despotisms" will bye and bye drop their autocratic notions, which look so childish and unchristian in these free generations, and will reach out fraternal hands to us. But that will not be yet awhile; and we shall do wisely to concentrate our thoughts on the practical. It has been one of the gladsome discoveries of recent years among the Free Churches that, notwithstanding all our different dialects, there is a mother tongue that is common to us all. Personally, I rejoice in the dialects. Dialects are always of service in conserving words and phrases that are

racy of the soil, and that are sinewy with the aboriginal strength of the old Saxon. And I do not hesitate to say that I rejoice in our denominational dialects, and hope we shall not allow them to die out. The mother tongue would have been greatly impoverished but for the vernacular of the Quaker, the Baptist, the Primitive Methodist, and so forth. I hope you will not forget how to talk your own denominational dialect, and to talk it well. There is a story of a man—I tell it you as a warning—who was a great linguist. Such was his command of the various European languages that he could make a speech in any of them. Only it came to pass that in his interest in, and enthusiasm for, other people's languages, he entirely forgot his own ; and it was in his own native speech that he was the most indifferent performer. I seem to have met the denominational counterpart of that linguist. He is the Baptist who is more enthusiastic about every other denomination than he is about his own ; the Congregationalist who waxes eloquent about the merits of the Society of Friends, and forgets to subscribe to the necessities of his own Church. Some among us will erect monuments over the pits out

of which their Christian neighbours were digged, and are ashamed to recognise or acknowledge their own ancestral cradle. That spirit is very silly, and I can only hope that it will not flourish with the prosperity of inter-denominationalism. A wholesome pride in our forbears, in the principles they have bequeathed to us, and the programme dictated by those principles is a fair thing, and a helpful thing for every Free Church man and woman. But when I have said that, I have this to add. It is the Free Churchman's glory that it is possible for him to be a Catholic. He is the only Catholic in Christendom as it seems to me; that is to say, he is the only person who is free to act as a Catholic. We may gladly recognise that many men of catholic spirit exist in the sacerdotal communions, but they are prevented by the system of which they are a part, from preaching in the pulpits of Free Churches, or inviting Free Churchmen to preach in theirs. They sign their consent to creeds, such as the Athanasian, which are of the most exclusive and divisive character. At their communion service, no Nonconformist could legally attend, and probably he or she would not be permitted to participate if the fact were known

that they had not been confirmed. The sacerdotal communions do, as a matter of fact, unchurch the greater part of Christendom. It may be further remarked that they unchurch one another. They deny the validity of our orders, and it is little satisfaction to reflect that their attitude to one another is as mutually exclusive as their attitude to us. There is a famous saying of John Henry Newman, at the time when he was still a member of the English Church, written to express his antipathy to the Society of Friends. Said he: "There is a sect which denies both baptism and the Lord's supper. Every Churchman must regard its members as altogether external to the fold of Jesus Christ, and must regard them as mere heathen, except in doctrine." Such a passage appears to us as less offensive than sorrowful and pitiable. Our sense of its gratuitous insolence is less keen than our sense of its blindness to reality. No such saying could ever make me forget the debt which I and thousands of Nonconformists owe to Newman for his luminous spiritual insight; but if I were asked whether John Henry Newman or John Bright did more to make England Christian, I should declare unhesitatingly for John Bright.

Yet John Bright, according to Newman, was to be regarded as a "mere heathen," and wholly external to the fold of Christ, which only shows how impossible it is for a sacerdotalist to be a Catholic. For my part, I could not be happy if I could believe for a moment that any Romanist or Anglican, who was a sincere believer in Christ, was not within His fold. If I had to go about the world, believing that the Son of Man excommunicates from His fellowship, and refuses to acknowledge anyone whose life is dedicated to His service, because of the omission of this or that form, I think I could never smile again. The Free Churchman believes that the Christian Church on earth consists of "all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity and in truth." That is the only Catholic attitude. That it is possible for us to act upon the belief is the glory of our Free Church position.

While I am upon this subject, I should like to put in a plea for the formation, by all of you, of a catholic library. If I am asked whether I am not afraid lest some of the great masters of style, who devoted their great powers to the service of hierarchical Churches, may destroy your con-

fidence in your Free Church position, I reply that we had better abandon our position at once, if we can only hope to maintain it by becoming so many ostriches with our heads in the sand. We are bound to hear all that can be said from any and every point of view. Our fundamental position is a daring one. We are not Christians because we refuse to read what leading agnostics have to say; but because we have tested our faith and proved its value in experience. We are not Free Churchmen because we are ignorant, either of the many splendid passages in the history of the Church of Rome or the Church of England, nor of such arguments as their leading apologists can adduce in favour of that sacerdotal interpretation of Christianity, which they incorporate. I can, therefore, with all confidence, advise you to form your libraries on a broad and catholic basis; and to remember that the value of your library will depend, not upon the number of volumes it contains, but rather in the carefulness and appropriateness of your selection. We live, fortunately for us, in days when a shilling will go as far in the purchase of good literature as five shillings a generation back, and the Free Church minister who sets aside

a modest proportion of his slender income for the purchase of books, can be sure of getting value for his money. The best German theological works, indeed, are hard for us to come at, because, having a limited sale, and an almost unlimited length, they are necessarily dear to buy. We are not afraid of their supposed heterodoxy; only of their price. We have better chances when we are dealing with our own writers; though standard theological commentaries always cost money; and commentaries become obsolete almost as quickly as Government guns. But in regard to what one may call the classic literature of the soul, we are in a very happy and prosperous position. For a pound or two a man may get together a library of surpassing religious value. He may then test how pleasant a thing it is for violently antagonistic doctors and theologians to dwell together in unity. "There," as Baxter said of heaven, "Calvin and Zwinglius are well united." There Luther and Erasmus discourse in peace; and prophets as far apart as Francis and Savonarola, Bernard and Milton, Andrews and Latimer, Pascal and Bunyan, Wesley and Lammennais, Newman and Robertson, Pusey and Spurgeon, Keble and

Dale, and dozens of others I might mention, conspire to complete our theological education. Somehow the flail of time winnows the husks from the grain; the accidental and perishable from the essential and immortal parts, and our religious seers live eventually by what is universal, not by what is sectional and divisive, in their utterances. Many an excellent Free Church sermon has derived its inspiration from Dean Church or Newman or Philipps Brooks. It is astonishing how digestive is their doctrine, and how nourishing to the Puritan constitution. We thrive on it; nay, we apply ourselves to it in our times of weakness, and are conscious that we thereby become stronger in the faith. It is with these volumes, typical of many schools of religious thought and faith, as it is with the hymns which repose so happily between the covers of our denominational hymn books. When our faith and zeal need recruiting, or our sorrow-stricken spirits need consoling, we turn to some great spiritual lyric, and do not stay to enquire whether it is the product of an experience of God's goodness that made eloquent the soul of a Roman Catholic, a Quaker, or a Unitarian. All we know

is that only the authentic touch of God's spirit on the soul could make the hymn we sing such a vehicle of inspirations or consolations generation after generation.

It is hardly necessary to say to you to-day that your library should be catholic, in an even wider sense. It should be as representative of the great world of thought, as you can contrive. Some of you, whose bent is predominantly theological, need all the more on that account to let some of the great masters of fiction take you with them to see life, whether it be in the court, or in the slums, or in the quiet country side. In this way our insight is deepened, and our experience enlarged, and our imagination stimulated. It is no purpose of mine to convert this lecture into a mere catalogue of names, but Scott and Thackeray, Dickens and George Eliot, Jane Austen and George Meredith, Dumas, and the best of Balzac, with, of the modern American school, all of W. D. Howells that you can get, and all of Henry James that you can stand, provide us with something to go on with. It is a curious thing that a Puritan culture should ever have been supposed to be antagonistic to fiction. For not only is the finest fiction in the

world the product of the Divinest authorship—I mean the incomparable parables of Christ; but a statement I once made in public has been often quoted but never challenged yet, and I do not think it easily could be, that the three most popular novels in the world were all written by Congregationalists —The Pilgrim's Progress, by John Bunyan; Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe; Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe. If fiction is improper, therefore, we are particularly flagrant offenders; and are justly liable to the indictment that we have set the fashion; and that, if we think it naughty, we do the things we think naughty with most uncommon zest and success. But, of course, the days when good deacons, like David Livingstone's father, banished novels and books of science from their homes as being equally inspired from beneath, have passed away; and we are only admonished of their memory to observe due metes and bounds in our somewhat late conversion to the benefits of fiction. Some of you will have anticipated the suggestion that books of science and history may well be called in to give to fiction its proper balance of fact. There is, of course, the difficulty of knowing whether all

science—that of Darwin, for instance—*is* fact; and as for history, do not historians like Froude and Freeman quarrel over the facts with as much acerbity as Calvinists and Arminians over the doctrine of election? Nevertheless, I do venture to urge the advantage to a minister of having in his possession, and reading steadily through, one or two of the classic books of science, if for no other reason than to acquaint himself with the eminent scientific virtues of method, patience, and precision. Perhaps I ought to add this word of warning. Science has come to stand for a vast field of investigation and speculation; and the scientific student is apt to resent the airy fashion in which we sometimes discourse on science in our sermons, and the quite astonishing views we sometimes attribute to scientific people. There are subjects with which one may have just a nodding acquaintance, and a very pleasant thing it is. But there are some that are exacting, and that seem to say to us, "Either know me well, or do not presume to talk about me at all." Science is of the latter category, I feel. She disdains a nodding acquaintance; and if we greet her too audaciously, without a proper intro-

duction, she cuts us dead, and is at no pains to conceal the smile. It is well for us when some scientist of authority will condescend unto our low estate, and present us for our acceptance and guidance some of the conclusions of science, translated into fairly popular English, and graduated to our low degree of scientific intelligence. For myself, I follow the work of science, and her breathless discoveries, with the profoundest admiration, but always at a great distance ; and after all, when one reflects on one's own feeling of irritation when some scientist so-called, destitute of reverence, invades the field of theology with "alarums and excursions," one has some realisation of the emotions of a genuine scientist who hears some raw theologian discuss, in a few peremptory sentences, decisions that have been built up by a life-time of patient and modest research. In the presence of these magnificent illustrations of what industry and thought and ingenuity can accomplish, it behoves us to be as reverent in discussing, in our amateur way, the beliefs of modern science, as we have a right to ask the scientist to be in discussing modern theology. Only a reverent and sympathetic spirit on our part is likely to beget a

reciprocally reverent and sympathetic spirit on theirs.

I should wish to repeat the substance of this counsel in regard to such works on political economy, or books dealing with commerce and business, as ought to find a place upon your shelves. It would probably have been time well spent if we had all had a year or two in a good business house, so as to get some insight into business matters, and the actual ways of the world. We are apt to do injustice to our hearers, simply because we do not know enough about them to be able to put ourselves in their place. I remember very well that soon after I had begun my ministry, I preached a sermon on "Profit and Loss," and a business member of my congregation wrote to me afterwards to complain that I had not allowed him enough interest to live on. I never treated him in that niggardly fashion again; I let him have as much interest as a Hebrew money-lender. But it was certainly an example of the lack of proper training. I sincerely wish that every theological student's course might include even a few lectures on social science and political economy. It is not so much that this or that economical

theory is valuable to us, for there are antagonistic schools of economics as there are antagonistic schools of theology ; but we ought to know something of the great classes of facts, which have seemed to men like Mill, Adam Smith, Fawcett, or Ruskin to justify the theories they have advanced and defended. It is not probable that, with all the demands on our time and thought, we can hope to become expert economists ; but it ought to be possible for our congregations to perceive that we are well aware of the magnitude and complexity of the practical problems that confront Christianity ; and that we are not laying down the law and indicating its application without some knowledge of affairs.

If I were to try to say all that I think in regard to the study of history, and the desirability of every minister mapping out for himself a course of historical reading, I should never get this lecture finished. I have suggested to you already how necessary it is for Free Church ministers to realise Christendom. It is quite true that the present day progress of this now mighty Free Church river of ours is striking and fascinating to a degree. But we cannot do justice to it if we have never explored

the upper reaches, and discovered what singular streams, from what obscure lands and remote hills, have been tributary to our waters. I do not feel that anyone can rightly understand and interpret the life of these Churches of ours, who has not read enough of Christian history to be able to feel that he had taken a fair general survey of the whole. Every part of Christendom needs the whole to explain it. After all, we are children of a mighty mother, and if we are to know ourselves, we must know our parentage. We may have figured late on the majestic family tree; but, if so, we were a reversion to type,—a return to a simpler and purer and more primitive order. We are thus not a freak, not a sport, not an excrescence; but a correspondence to nature in her simplest, her aboriginal character. There is always a science of history; and this certainly is the science of ours. In giving birth to the Free Churches, Christendom "harked back" to primitive Christianity, and has reproduced in their triumphs many of the splendid audacities and amazing victories of the early Church. But it is not only of the Churches that I would have you read. Where can the preacher find such impressive and admirable material for

illustrating his sermons as in the story of the rise and fall of earthly dynasties and empires, democracies and aristocracies and hierocracies? You and I do not believe that in Hebrew history we can discern the finger of God, and that in Roman history, or Venetian history, or French History, or English history, or American history, there is no writing of the Divine hand. Jewish history is not sacred, and Grecian history secular. It is not only in the emancipation of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage that

> God plants His footsteps on the sea,
> And rides upon the storm.

In the emancipation of Europe from the Napoleonic despotism, or of America from the even darker despotism of the slave-system, God moved in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. Every page in history is eloquent to the man who can read between the lines of the existence of a Moral Governor of this world; every completed chapter is a contribution to the solution of the enigma of human destiny. Indeed, the footsteps of God in the life of humanity make history—the only history that interests and arrests us. History is not the unsavoury records of the

mistresses of kings, or the empty vanities and vulgarities of courtiers. History is the working out of infinitely great and solemn ethical ends, often dim and obscure, but gradually looming out, dread and distinct, so that even a wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein.

But I must not linger on this subject, because I must complete my plea for a catholic culture and a catholic library, and like a good preacher indicate the application. There are some men who are looking forward to pulpit work, who will tell you that they do not care for poetry, and cannot read it. They are like those who have no ear or taste for music, and cannot tell one tune from another. Now I am not sure that an appreciation of poetry can be successfully cultivated; but I am satisfied that a total incapacity to enjoy good poetry argues a very serious defect, and one that, while it would not prejudice the chances of a lawyer, does and must prejudice the chances of a preacher. It argues, first of all, a defective ear so far as the rhythm and modulation of sentences is concerned. But it argues also a certain deficiency in the higher sensibility of the spirit to beauty of thought and expression. Therefore, I think that

any minister, who is conscious of this lack of appreciation of the best poetry, would do well to seek to educate himself into some sympathy with the poetical spirit, remembering that we have to touch many chords and appeal to many natures. We ought to graduate in the University of Literature, which it is certain we never can if we do not sit at the feet of those who have worn the bays and occupied the chair of poetry—the world's real Laureates. You may be quite sure that it has not been for nothing that the earliest records of civilization familiarise us with the poet as akin to the prophet, throwing his message into musical language, extemporising snatches of song, and by this means kindling the souls of the people. Homer and Virgil, Omar Khayyam and the Hebrew Psalmists are, after all, only illustrations of the fact that the soul of a people has a trick of expressing itself on a poet's lips. Do not forget that, though men sometimes call Englishmen cold —stolid—it is one of our chief glories that we have produced the most magnificent poetical literature in the world. Therefore do not think you can preach to the English people without some sympathy with that side of their genius and character.

There is more—much more—that I might say while I am upon this subject of the books you read and assimilate. When you leave college your study will be your university. You will have your professors and lecturers all around you; and you may perhaps be inclined to congratulate yourself that you need not listen to them unless you like. Gradually, no doubt, some whom you revere to-day, almost to the point of idolatry, will be dethroned, and other masters in their subjects will take their place. Most of us pass through stages in which the quotations in our sermons indicate the nature of our admirations. You will find, no doubt, that it is not easy to be broad in your reading without being shallow, and you will have to bear in mind that Mr. Ruskin somewhere says that "the gift whereby we are made narrow is the gift whereby we are made powerful." But it is the glory of the Christian preacher that all thought and all experiences are of service to him, and that all streams of influence may be and should be tributary to his ministry.

But now, surely, this catholic culture that is to make us large-minded and great-hearted men and ministers, will have its effect in our attitude to our

fellow-Christians. I have already urged upon you to make up your minds that you will take your full part in all the life and work of your town, village, or city. It will always carry weight with your fellow-citizens that you are recognised as a man of ideas, of large sympathies and wide reading ; that you have interests outside the boundaries of your meeting-house ; that in a very real sense the world is your parish ; or that, as Goldsmith put it, you are "a citizen of the world." It will help you with the man whose religious life is rather a group of prejudices than of serious convictions, that he realises that your range of thought is not narrow, and that your ideals are at once lofty and wide and masculine. One of the practical problems that will meet you at the threshold of your ministry will probably be your relation to the clerygman of the parish. It may, of course, happen by great good fortune that he will be anxious to establish friendly relations with you, and to propose some measure of practical co-operation. But, in our days, alas ! the prospect is the other way. The theories he holds will probably oblige him to regard you as a schismatic, and one whose ministry he cannot recognise as valid. It is, I admit,

almost more than human nature can stand to be so regarded, without a measure of irritation and resentment. But our ambition must be to let our action interpret our principles. Now, our principles I take to be these. First of all, we are Catholics. As such we are bound to entertain, even to one who depreciates and insults our ministry, which is as sacred to us as his is to him, the respect which is due to a brother in Christ. Secondly, we are democrats. We do not think a clergyman or a minister is in any way superior in office to the humblest member of Christ's Church ; and, therefore, we remember that our mission is not primarily concerned with dignitaries and officials, but with the people. We are there for the sake of the people ; and the hostile attitude of a parish priest must not divert us from our purpose. Our business is not to attack him, but to make our appeal in the name of Jesus Christ, and the freedom of His Church, to all people in our district, without distinction of class or creed. Of course, we must expect that occasions will arise when presumptuous sacredotal claims will have to be challenged, and the exactions of a privileged Church will have to be fought. Such was the

case during the recent education controversy, which was the cause of acute and painful divisions of feeling in almost every parish in the land ; and such will be the case when the more far-reaching Church and State issue has to be publicly argued and settled. At such times it is due to ourselves, to our history, and to those principles of religious liberty, of which for 300 years we have been the trustees in English life, that we should let all men know on what side our heart's convictions lie. But even so, in the hottest of the strife, it should be not impossible to make our fellow-Christians realise that we hold by the catholic position ; that we think all Churches and all Christians should have equal treatment ; that we are not fighting with men, but with theories which we hold to be inimical to the commonwealth and disastrous to the Church. Controversy is never an easy business ; but it has to be. The unsacerdotal Churches fighting the sacerdotal theories and claims, are the exact twentieth-century reproduction of that earliest of Christian controversies, when Paul withstood Peter to his face. And of one thing you may be certain, that even as the central Church in England is St. Paul's, and not St.

Peter's, the national soul is on the side of Paul and freedom, and not of Peter and his ecclesiastical red-tape and formalism. Paul is the true catholic; and Peter is the high ecclesiastic, sharp and narrow.

As to the cultivation of friendly and intimate relations with other Free Churchmen, the occasion when that is a matter of difficulty will be very exceptional. I do not know whether you hold any views on the question of the union of Free Church Christendom. There are some movements in progress to-day that point in that direction. In Canada and Australia, those new continents where audacity is a virtue and experiment a grace, they are seriously discussing the lines of a possible Free Catholic Church, in which there would be room for various ordinances, ministers, and officers. The hope is that it may be found possible to combine diversities of operations and governments, and yet have one fabric and one spirit; so as to end the prejudice that is everywhere excited among non-Christians, in consequence of our unhappy divisions! At home, several bodies of Methodists have felt their way to union; while north of the border, as we know, the Free Presbyterians have

cemented their alliance. Personally, I have no interest in forcing developments that must come gradually if they are to come naturally. But when I ask what fruit we are to expect of this spirit of catholicity, I cannot be in doubt about the answer. It may not be in my time; and it may even not be in yours; but that there will be irresistible movements towards union among those Free Churches, which are already one in their fundamental witness and their democratic spirit, I have not the shadow of a doubt. Think of ourselves. We differ in respect of a rite, of the value and importance of which we are all convinced. But we have to ask ourselves the question, whether the future will consider that that difference on one single doctrine, can justify the two great branches of modern Congregationalism living apart from one another? I do not believe it will. Our fathers differed, as we differ, on the question of the mode and meaning of baptism; but to me a greater matter than to remember their differences is to remember that they received together a baptism of blood and a baptism of fire. Despite axe and stake and rope, they kept the faith which we inherit; and to me it is something of a tragedy,

I confess, that the descendants of those Free Church pioneers should not confess in one great union of Churches their common origin, and their identity of government. At present you may say, with justice, that any such proposition is not within the range of practical politics. But I mention it because it is men like yourselves who must make it so; and you will help to make it so if you go from this college highly resolved to forward the cause of the Free Church unity by every means within your power. When I lie and dream, as I sometimes do, what it would be that would strike the imagination of this western world, and re-inspire in a working-class democracy the belief that Christianity is the hope of man, my imagination seizes upon the vision of the uprising of a great Catholic priestless Church, and the worthy incarnation of that primitive spiritual Evangel of the Fatherhood of God, the Saviourhood of Christ, and the Brotherhood of Man. Such a Church—and such a Church alone, I believe—might contemplate the possibility of the reconquest of the West for Christ and the kingdom. It should be neither Lutheran, Calvinist, or Wesleyan, for no human name is worthy to adorn the Bride of

Christ. Within its borders Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. It should ask nothing of the State but liberty to serve it. It should seek no establishment, but establishment in the affections and voluntary suffrages of the people. It should be the Church of the Christian democracy, and to use the famous language of Lincoln, "conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." For that Catholic, Democratic, Priestless Church, I think it is worth while to cherish a sincere aspiration. It can do us no harm to live towards an ideal. It must, I think, on the contrary, have an ennobling influence upon our own spirits. Perhaps it is impossible; perhaps not our principles but our prejudices and our bigotries make it impossible, or at any rate indefinitely postpone its realisation. So we are like the spiritual tenant of Tennyson's "Palace of Art," we

> Throw our royal robes away,
> "Make us a cottage in a vale," we cry,
> "Where we may mourn and pray."

Our ruder, homelier tenements may have to do for us awhile, until we have learned penitence

for our narrowness and strife and unchristian division.

> "Yet pull not down our palace towers that are
> So lofty, beautifully built;
> Perchance we may return with others there
> When we have purged our guilt."

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